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POST-WAR BUSINESS UNDERTAKING

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A FRIEND

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

[This charming tribute to Sir William Rothenstein, whose death was announced on February 14, was originally written in 1912 and first published in *Bharati* (1319, *Kartik*). It has been translated from the original Bengali by Kshitis Roy.]

ON reaching London I took shelter in a hotel. It was as if I found myself in the crowded gateway of moving traffic. What transpired inside remained a mystery, nor was acquaintance possible with the inmates. I just watched the people—coming and going. All I could see was that there was no end of hurry and bustle. What the business was about passed my comprehension. I knew not if anybody kept count of the impact of all this colossal bustle—for good or for bad.

The gong goes. Inside the dining room I find groups of men and women, in twos and threes, sitting round their small tables and noiselessly eating their food while the tall, solemn-faced waiter hastens from one table to another, serving with dexterous hands. Some finish their newspaper along with their meal, then dart a swift glance at their pocket watch, put on their hat and sally forth. The room grows empty. They get together only during lunch or dinner hour ; then vanish, no one knows where.

Although I do not need to look at it, I too pull out the watch like everybody else, snap it open and then quietly put it back into my pocket. When it is neither meal-time nor time to retire, the hotel looks like a boat moored, and one is at a loss to explain one's presence therein during these hours. The hotel is a fit place for those who have their work to go to and no place to live in. A bazaar residential arrangement like this is not quite suitable for such superfluous persons as I. As I stand by the open window I find streams of people running in various directions. They seem to me to be so many tools in the hands of an invisible mechanic. What is being forged remains likewise invisible, on the whole. It is like a colossal factory where history is being manufactured, where millions of hammers strike at a million different spots with swift and terrific blows. I stand outside this giant engine and see the living pistons, propelled by the steam of hunger, moving up and down with an indomitable energy.

Foreigners who come here for the first time cannot escape this first impression of the huge human machine of the god of history. What heat, what clamour ! How the wheels revolve ! If I shut my eyes for a while and try to form an idea of all the labour and all the movement that constitute this city of London, what terrible persistence ! Nobody knows to what end is this incessant drive, what latent power is in the process of being made manifest.

But one cannot keep on seeing man only as a machine. If I cannot see the *man* in him, why did I come all this way ? It is of course much easier to see him as a cog in the wheel than as he is by himself. Unless he takes you of his own accord into the inner compartments of his mind, you cannot gain admission to the essential man. It is not so simple as buying a ticket to a theatre. You cannot gain that admission for any price—simply because it is priceless.

Luckily for me I got that one rare chance. I came by a friend. There are some who are born friends. It does not lie with all of us to be so. In order to become a true friend one has to give oneself. As in the case of other charities, this gift presupposes a fund to draw upon. Mere wish to give is not enough.

The friend I was talking of is a famous artist ; his name is William Rothenstein. In India I had met him for a brief while. As a matter of fact at the time of setting out for Europe I had felt attracted by the prospect of coming closer to him. The moment I met him I felt as if in a trice I had crossed over the gateway of the hotel. Now there was nothing to stop me.

He lived at Hampstead Heath. The place was a green mound and looked like the heaving breast of London. In the backyard of his house nestling against the slope of the hill was a strip of a garden. Facing the garden was a long verandah attached to the drawing room, half-hidden by a rose creeper and rapturous with the fragrance of many flowers. According as my fancy took me, I sat in the verandah with a book in hand which I hardly ever read. I felt happier to watch his three children play—two boys and a girl. Their childish joy was infectious.

The path from the strange to the familiar is a long and arduous one. I had hardly the time to traverse the entire course. My capacity, too, was limited. Habitually shy, I recoiled from the thought of muscling my way to the desired goal. Besides I did not hold the key

wherewith to unlock the main entrance to the English language. It was a hurdle race for me. Such a process is too much of a strain and does not help one to be true to one's nature. Unless one can express oneself without let or hindrance, one cannot get to know the real and true self of another. And so after a while, tired of trying to dodge the monstrous wheels of the mechanised traffic, I would have at last traced my way back to my Bengal, nestling in the embrace of her rivers, that flow by the green paddy fields glistening in the autumn sun. When my mind was at such a pass in came my friend. He raised the screen and I saw the light burning and a seat kept ready for me. I left the dead-weight of the foreigner's strangeness outside the door, discarded the dust-laden coat of the traveller, and passed in a moment from the hustle of the crowd into the intimacy of a home.



THE POST-WAR PLANNING FOR INDIA

(*With special reference to the Bombay Plan*)

By Prof. GYANCHAND

THE London *Times* in a leader made the following comment on the Bombay Plan recently : “Comparison between the enthusiasm, which greeted the first part of the Plan on its publication about twelve months ago and the almost perfunctory reception accorded to the final instalment provide the measure of the advance of public opinion during the interval—an advance for which the authors are themselves entitled to due credit”, and attributes the contrast to the fact that “the Bombay Planners no longer possess the monopoly of economic revelation, there are other and competing versions”. But the fact that there are other and competing versions itself shows that the avowed object of the Plan—i.e., to provide a basis of discussion and stimulate thinking on the economic future of the country—has been fulfilled in a large measure. The Plan was published at a time when the country not only was, as it is now, in a state of political stalemate, but constructive thought had practically been suspended and mental negation was the outstanding feature of the life of our nation. We are still living in a repressive atmosphere ; and considering that we are passing through one of the most critical periods of human history, most of what is being said and written to-day is singularly unfruitful from the long-term point of view. In spite of this there is perceptible a change in the mental climate of the country and the people are showing signs of the stirring of a new life which is likely to take a definite form as soon as the Ordinance rule is relaxed and the forces now held in check are given a chance to express themselves. In this process of revival “the enthusiasm which greeted the first part of the plan” was a very clear portent—an indication of the faith in the country’s possibilities and future in spite of our dismal present.

The war has laid bare the fundamental weakness of our national life. It has shown in a gruesome way the absence of physical, economic and spiritual reserves. The appalling loss of life in Bengal and some other parts of the country and the inability of the Government and the people to tackle the problems created by the war is a measure of our resourcelessness—our utter lack of means and ability to face up to the problems of a major crisis of our national life. We cannot afford to drift any longer or let the future take care of itself.

A concerted effort on a truly grand scale has become an imperative necessity by the stress of events, and a fast developing international situation greatly re-inforces the need for our becoming masters of our own faith—of planning the economic and social development of our people.

For an all-round concerted effort we need a community of purpose, driving power to carry out the purpose with determination and will, and must know how to forge an instrument for producing results commensurate with our needs. Planning needs skill, knowledge and insight ; i.e., it cannot be carried out without utilizing the service of experts at all stages of planned development. But the primary condition of the introduction and successful execution of any plan worth the name must be a nation-wide appreciation of its importance and meaning and the willingness to make the necessary sacrifices to insure its success. Soviet Russia has achieved wonders during and before the war, but in spite of the totalitarian character of the regime under which these results have been achieved, it is clear that essentially in this one sixth of the world a magnificent co-operative effort has been put forth and millions of men and women have worked together in a superb common enterprise for a great and inspiring purpose. Force has been used in Soviet Russia and there are indications that it has at times been used in excess, even if it is granted that force is "the midwife of revolution". But men driven by terror can never achieve a fraction of what the Russians have achieved. For that social vision, a great faith and readiness to subordinate small personal ends to a "purpose greater than ourselves" are absolutely essential and without these the Russians could not possibly have come through the ordeals which the Fate set them before and during the war with such credit and glory. We in India need not—as a matter of fact cannot—reproduce the sequence of events which has made Soviet Russia what she is to-day—not only one of the three Great Powers but a beacon of light and a source of inspiration to progressive forces all over the world. All the same we can take to heart the lessons of Russian experience and the most important of these is that planning is and must be a great adventure for a country, has to be a common task for the whole nation and cannot be carried out without the whole-hearted co-operation and unremitting effort of the people. In India also for planning we have to

create a new spirit, mobilize our human, even more than our material, resources and fill our people with a passionate desire to surpass our highest achievements of the past and with a vision of the future unfolding itself in a series of targets, each higher than the one that is reached or realized. This is the essence of the Bombay Planners' plea for the establishment of a National Government vested with full freedom. Their plea is not a political slogan. It is based upon understanding of the essentials of planning and has, of course, to be acted upon if we have to evolve a plan which will really fire the imagination of our people and give them courage and strength to face and solve its difficult and complicated problems. Planning, it has to be clearly appreciated, is not merely a job for the experts and we cannot get on with it without evoking and harnessing the best and the highest that our people are capable of for the execution of the plan.

Planning raises difficult issues of ideology which the authors of the Bombay Plan meet by declaring themselves in favour of "the middle way"—of an economy and an order in which private enterprise will be controlled and regulated but not hampered or unduly circumscribed in the service of the community. There is a very good case for this view if its full implications are clearly understood. Violence, even if it is regarded as a necessary evil in this imperfect world, as an instrument of social change, is a double-edged weapon. It hurts its users as much as its victims, and in India there are specially grave risks in relying upon it to any considerable extent owing to the latent conflicts of our national life because of the division not only of economic, but also of territorial and communal, interests. Violence may set up a furnace in which these differences may be melted and fused but there is, in the present circumstances, greater chance of these differences being accentuated rather than liquidated by an ill-considered appeal to force. Fundamental changes are unavoidable if really worth-while changes are to be brought about, but extreme measures are likely to defeat themselves if they are resorted to without regard for the reactions which they are likely to call forth. Social antagonisms have, therefore, to be avoided as far as possible and changes that are necessary have to be introduced without recourse to violence.

The authors of the Plan do not however seem to be aware of,

or at least they do not underline, the one essential condition for the avoidance of the use of extreme measures. Experience has shown that these are forced upon the advocates of basic social changes by the blind clinging to their anti-social privileges by the men in power for the continuance of their dominant position. The Marxist view that it is not possible to replace the hierarchy of property-owners by democracy of worth and merit merely by appeal to reason is based upon the assumption that the rich identify their own interests with those of the community and protect the former in the name of the latter by using their legal, economic and political powers without any regard for the interest of the masses. The Bombay Planners belong to and represent what is commonly known as big business ; and though they seek to disarm suspicion and opposition by professing progressive views they have not been able to meet the criticism that their position and actions belie their avowed intentions of having put forward their plan primarily in the interest of the community. They, taken together, hold what amounts to a semi-monopolistic position in our industrial system and are busy strengthening and consolidating it by acquiring control of new industrial concerns, financial agencies and the press. It is true that monopoly of foreign capital in key positions of our economic life is still there and has to be replaced by truly Indian control, but monopoly of foreign capital cannot be counteracted by building up monopolistic control of Indian economic life by a few families but by dealing with the problem of monopolies as a whole and realising the benefits of integration by measures of co-ordination under public control. If the adoption of extreme measures is to be avoided and recourse to force prevented, it can be done only by the willingness of landed, financial and industrial vested interests to forego their privileges and powers, and of this willingness they have given no indication in practice or in the memoranda of the Bombay Planners.

The Bombay Planners are for extension of state enterprise and state control in various forms. They state the view that owing to state intervention in various spheres of economic activity and the introduction of payment according to the quantity and quality of work in Soviet Russia, "the distinction between capitalism and socialism has lost much of its significance from the practical standpoint." In India, as in other countries of the world, it is necessary

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to seek a way out of the existing confusion and frustration by adopting an empirical approach and avoiding fanatical insistence on doctrinaire formulas and theories. A great deal can be done to increase production and realise economic and social justice by effective control of production, distribution, consumption, investment, foreign trade and exchange, wages and working conditions and steeply graduated taxation. These are the measures which the Bombay Planners rely upon to develop and transform our economic system. But every thing would depend upon the spirit in which the control is exercised, i.e., upon making well-being of the community the decisive consideration on all crucial points. Private enterprise has, as they point out in their memorandum, to be really enterprising, i.e., it has to blaze new trails and not merely stand for the status-quo and seek to maintain it by becoming or remaining the real power behind the throne. State control, when the state is practically in the hands of the propertied classes, means public control for private ends, and all compromise formulas would, in that case, only promote private interests through the exercise of public authority, and common-weal will only become a cover for private greed. The essence of socialism is that it should enlist ability and character for maximising social welfare, and so long as men in power, whether in public or private sector of economic life, owe their position to their property rights and exercise the power in the interest of property and privilege, no real planning in the interest of the community is possible. Just as patriotism is the last argument of the least patriotic men, social good is being made by the capitalists all over the world a reason for consolidation of their own position after the war.

Personality is one of the supreme values of life but it cannot be realized by will to power or concentration upon the pursuit of selfish ends. Decentralized initiative is necessary for progress, freedom and flexibility of the economic system, but decentralization in which economic life becomes an outlet for acquisitive impulses can only breed conflict and lead to centralization in the hands of private interests for anti-social ends. The Bombay Planners reveal a lack of understanding of the fundamental importance of economic factors in quoting with approval the well-known view of J. M. Keynes according to which "dangerous human proclivities are canalized into comparatively harmless channels by the

existing opportunities of money-making and private wealth." If the mainspring of economic activities is to be relentless pursuit of personal ends—particularly for men at the top—there is no chance of a planned economy being brought into operation which will serve the highest interests of the community. The choice is not, as Keynes suggests, between tyrannizing over bank-balance and tyrannizing over fellow-citizens, but bank-balance, i. e., surplus wealth of the community, being used for tyrannizing over fellow-citizens or for developing the moral and material resources of the country. Gravamen of the charge against capitalism is that this surplus is at present unfairly acquired and ruthlessly used for, to use Keynes's words, "reckless pursuit of personal power and authority and other forms of self-aggrandizement," for exploitation of man by man, which can only be put an end to by changing the social centre of gravity, by transferring power from those who have to those who know and can build a social common-wealth in the real sense of the word. The Bombay Planners are unaware of this all-important need and make no provision for its satisfaction.

Finance has in the Bombay Plan been given a secondary role. This is as it should be. If the inwardness of Lord Wavell's words, quoted in Part I of the Plan, that money has to be found on the scale for fighting the evils of peace—poverty, lack of education, unemployment, ill-health—on which it has been forthcoming during the war, is understood, it is clear that money is not the thing. For planning we need men, materials, organization and ever-growing social purpose, and not finance. Financing agencies essentially are and really should be agencies for deciding proportions in which the wealth of the community should be used for development and current consumption and for account-keeping,—for clearing counter claims and recording and comparing social costs and total output and output of particular industries. In India income of the community being limited owing to low level at which production is being carried on, the task of earmarking the proportion to be used for investment—for improving the material equipment of the country—is bound to be a very difficult one. But if investment control is to be effective and financial agencies are to perform their other functions well, it is absolutely essential that these agencies should be state-owned and state-managed. The Bombay Planners are for public ownership of public-utility enter-

prises. All financial institutions—banks, insurance companies, investment trusts and all other similar institutions—are primarily and essentially public-utility undertakings in the truest sense of the word. To-day in this country, as in other countries, they are being used for magnifying the powers of the propertied classes manifold by placing at their disposal savings of the people which they use to increase their power without any regard for public-interests. In India these institutions are few and weak but they cannot be made numerous, sound and strong from the social standpoint unless they are regarded as public-utility undertakings and made public institutions. The fact that they are relatively undeveloped in this country makes it all the more necessary for the community to make finance its own function and discharge it to promote public good. Finance will remain master of the community and never become its servant and instrument, as the Bombay Planners want it to be, as long as it remains a private enterprise—i. e., so long as savings and credit institutions exist for and serve private ends.

It is not possible to examine critically financial estimates of the Bombay Plan. All plans and their figures at this stage are bound to be tentative. Their real utility is illustrative, i. e., they indicate the magnitude of the problem and the relative importance of the different elements in it. The Bombay Planners propose to spend Rs. 10,000 crores on the execution of their plan. This estimate was at first called astronomical and fantastic, but it is now becoming increasingly clear that as a measure of our needs the estimate is, if anything, modest ; it is unduly cautious rather than over-ambitious. Since the publication of Part I of the Plan, plans involving expenditure of hundreds of crores on specific objects have become the order of the day, and by the time the Government of India, the Provinces and the States complete and publish their plans, the total estimated expenditure on planning is likely to exceed rather than fall short of the Bombay estimate. Whatever the value of these estimates from the practical standpoint—and that is very little—the Bombay Planners have rendered a very useful service in educating public opinion. They have helped us to size-up our needs in an adequate manner and made us realize that the gravity and urgency of the situation makes it essential for us to be imaginative and bold in thought and action. If we are going to raise our 400 millions from their sub-human level of

existence to a level worth working for, it is going to be a stupendous undertaking and we must not be deterred by the magnitude of the task from undertaking it. India and the world are not going to be short of resources for the regeneration of humanity. The problem is a problem of will and not of money. Finance, if we know how to use it, is going to be, it has to be repeated, a secondary problem.

This of course does not mean that finance is not important. It is a means by which our resources have to be husbanded and utilized to the greatest advantage. This is the reason why it has been emphasized that public ownership and management of financial institutions is of vital importance. But otherwise also it is essential that the use of wrong methods of finance should be avoided. This consideration is specially relevant with regard to two methods supported by the Bombay Planners. They suggest that we should finance development by foreign borrowing to the extent of Rs. 700 crores and secondly propose to provide Rs. 3,000 crores by "creating" money. The first suggestion revives the painful associations of what India, like other politically weak and backward countries, has suffered at the hands of high finance ; and as our political position is far from assured, the danger of increasing the hold of foreign interests over our economic life by letting in more capital is a real one and has to be provided against. There is nothing wrong in raising foreign loans, but political complications, which the Bombay Planners want to avoid, will arise unless we are extremely careful with regard to the manner and methods of raising these loans. Reading between the lines one gets an impression that the Bombay Planners expect to avoid political complications by borrowing for development from the U.S.A. rather than from Great Britain. But in this respect, as in all others, we stand nothing to gain by playing off Uncle Sam against John Bull ; and it is likely that if we try the game, we shall end up by finding ourselves in the grip of Yankee John Bull Ltd instead of improving our position or working out our economic emancipation. Any further private investment of foreign capital in the country is fraught with grave risks and has to be avoided at all costs ; and this is the more necessary in cases in which its investment takes place in the name of Indo-British or Indo-American co-operation. It can never be co-operation of equals ; it will be collaboration in the rather disreputable sense in which the word has come to be

used during the war. That will, it need not be said, do us no good. Sir Feroz Khan's plea for fifty-fifty is a plea for economic servitude. There is real danger that industrialists in this country will be taken in by this kind of argument and prejudice seriously the economic development of the country. The reports are current which seem to have factual basis, according to which it appears that several such deals are contemplated or have already been struck. If this is so, the deals must be regarded as acts of betrayal from the wider standpoint, in spite of substantial private gains which they are sure to bring to the industrialists concerned. The Bombay Planners have, in the interest of the Plan, to repudiate such intentions and declare their position with regard to this kind of co-operation in clear terms.

This, however, does not rule out real co-operation if we can get it. India will need foreign assistance in the form of technical advice, skill, guidance and investment. The enlightened self-interest of highly developed countries requires that such assistance should be made freely available without attaching to it terms which they themselves would not accept if they were in our position ; and such assistance should be offered with full knowledge and cognizance of our own Government and through it. The Government should prepare schemes, like power development schemes, soil conservation schemes or irrigation schemes—as a matter of fact all schemes in which public interest is paramount—and try to negotiate for international assistance in various forms, including the grant of long-term loans on terms fully compatible with our national self-government and without the slightest risk of mortgaging our future. The best agency with which such negotiations can be carried on would be an institution like the International Bank provided for in the Brettonwood Agreement. Until such agreement can be concluded and we are in a position to safeguard our future, safety lies in depending upon our own resources and using them to the greatest advantage. It is as a matter of fact necessary to go further and buy up all foreign interests that there are in the country. One of the best uses to which we can put our sterling balances is to draw upon them for repatriation of foreign capital in this country. Its amount does not exceed £ 300 to £ 400 millions and we will have the means, when we have the necessary power, to acquire them and thereby remove one of the most fundamental causes of our economic exploitation. These interests

would have been easily acquired during the war if India had been in a position of other countries. Britain has had to sell foreign investments in a number of countries including the Dominions and would have had to adopt the same course in this country if our political status had not been what it is. Now that we are planning for the future on the assumption that India will be a free country, we have to make the acquisition of foreign economic interests an important item in economic schemes for post-war India.

The other suggestion for financing the country's economic development has given rise to even greater apprehension. "Created" money savours very much of inflation and as we have suffered and are suffering severely from inflation, a proposal for financing economic development to the extent of Rs. 3,000 crores by creating money naturally gives rise to fears of super-inflation. If creation of even 1,000 crores has meant appalling loss of life and a great deal more, creation of three times as much cannot but fill us with grave forebodings. The fears are intelligible and may turn out to be well-founded, but it is not inevitable that creation of money for economic development should have the same results as war-time inflation has had in this country. Inflation in countries like the U. S. A., Great Britain and Germany has, during the war, been on a much greater scale than in this country and yet it is known that they have not suffered even to a small extent from the evils which have afflicted us in the last three years ; and the difference is due to the difference in the efficacy of war-time controls in this country and the other countries referred to above and, of course, to the difference in their attitude towards the war and ours. Apart from the question of the extent to which created money should be used for the execution of economic plans, the point that matters is that if we can get the people fully behind the Plan by convincing them that it has been conceived in their interest and there will be no chance of sectional interests enriching themselves at the expense of the community, i. e., if we can generate and sustain the right spirit towards the Plan and ensure adequate supply and fair distribution of essentials by rationing and price-control, creation of money in itself will not cause any serious dislocation of economic life. It has also to be realized that funds needed for what is called working capital do not and need not involve any saving on the part of the community. These funds are needed

for carrying production from one stage to another—from initial stages to final consumption and it is not necessary to draw upon the savings of the community—the surplus—for providing these funds. The question raises many technical issues and it is not possible to deal with them here. But substantially the position will be as stated above. The Bombay Planners have themselves exaggerated the dangers of this policy. They speak of individual liberty and freedom of enterprise suffering a temporary eclipse owing to the measures which will have to be adopted to bridge the gap between the volume of purchasing power in the hands of the people and the volume of goods available. A gap there will be but no eclipse of freedom need be feared on that account if the Plan has wide popular support and its execution is efficient and equitable. In this case again it is not the method of finance that matters but its animating purpose and popular reaction to it. Finance will become a camp-follower if the plan is really people's plan, in the sense that it is for their good and is based upon their confidence.

Besides finance there are some other cardinal points which may be dealt with briefly. The problem of distribution is vital and has been given its due importance in Part II of the Bombay Plan. It is important for two reasons. In the first place, if the benefits of economic development are mainly to accrue to the people at large it is necessary that additional income that is produced should very largely flow into their hands, i.e., they should get much greater purchasing power than they possess at present—greater both relatively and absolutely. The other reason which makes fairer distribution a matter of necessity is that without it it will not be possible to sell the goods that are produced. At present it is known that the extreme poverty of our people inhibits economic development because of the limitation of the purchasing power of the people. Vast increase of purchasing power in the hands of the masses is a necessary condition of the expansion of production. The avowed intention of the Plan being to raise the standard of living of the people, production has to be regulated with reference to the needs of the community in the relative order of importance—according to a social scale of priorities—and the people have to have the money to satisfy these essential needs. This end is, according to the Bombay Planners, to be realized by various means. Development of social services, by provision of schools, hos-

pitals, social insurance schemes, which cannot be done without levy of steeply graduated high taxation, will itself be a very important method of realizing this end. And the other should be fixing minimum rates of wages in industry and agriculture. The minimum may vary from industry to industry, but should in no case fall below the minimum needed for socially estimated essential needs. At the outset this end cannot be realized owing to the low level of production in the country. There is not enough wealth to go round for fixing an effective minimum. But this has to be a primary object of the Plan and extreme vigilance will be necessary to ensure that it is given in practice the importance which is its due. But a lower limit to income is in itself not enough. An upper limit has also to be fixed. Without the latter for a long time we will not have the resources to attain and maintain the minimum standard of living for our people ; and fixing the upper limit has to be given its due place in any scheme of fair distribution. The Bombay Planners have admitted the need for minimum wages but do not appreciate that maximum limit is also a necessary condition of fixing the minimum. Graduated taxation should aim at setting a limit to the non-taxed income, but more direct measures of control of incomes would also be necessary and have to be embodied in our economic and social policy. Fixing of the lower and upper limits—of floor and ceiling—is for us an inescapable necessity and has to be squarely faced. Practical utility of any compromise formula that may be made the basis of planned economy in India is to be judged by the willingness of the richer classes to accept an outside limit to the aggregate individual income—i.e., income from all sources. Unless the range of inequality in this country is limited, practical difficulties in the way of realizing the object of the Plan will be almost insuperable.

From the point of view of distribution the question of small industries and handicrafts in our productive system is also important. Decentralized production is relied upon by the Bombay Planners as one of the measures for wide distribution of national income and is regarded as necessary to provide employment to millions of workers for whom there will be no place even in developed agriculture and industry. The question is, as is well known, even more fundamental and the points at issue have been set forth by Mr. S. N. Agarwal in his *The Gandhian Plan*. The issues are important and involve funda-

mental difference in the points of view. Power-production, i. e., large-scale production, cannot but mean, according to the Gandhian view, centralization of wealth and economic power, mechanization and therefore automatization of work, regimentation of workers, scramble for markets and raw-materials, continuance of deep-seated antagonism within and between nations, and because of them world-wars of even greater ferocity in the future. Socialization of production, according to this view, is no solution of the problem because socialization cannot avoid centralization of power and authority and must therefore mean dictatorship of individuals and parties—negation of economic, social and political democracy. Decentralization of production is therefore held to be necessary for humanised production, for making the producer master of his own life, for social harmony, for lasting peace and true and real democracy rooted in the everyday life of the people. Mahatma Gandhi's view that certain evils are inherent in industrialization and no amount of socialization can eradicate them is the basis of the above view. The issues being fundamental can only be discussed with reference to ultimate values and it is not possible to deal with them in a short paragraph which I can devote to this important question. The Bombay Planners do not share the Gandhian view and provide for handicrafts and small industries in their scheme only for affording employment and reducing the need for capital in the early stages of development. We in India are not in a position to make a free choice on this important point even if we get complete self-government and there are no political restrictions on our freedom of choice. All other countries of the world have either been industrialized or will be industrialized in the post-war period. The war has quickened the pace of industrialization and the events after the war will carry the process much farther. India cannot isolate herself and in order to come to and hold her own in the post-war world she will have to be equipped on a scale and upto the standard set by world forces. The Gandhian Plan admits the necessity of industrialization in basic industries and provides for their nationalization. These will be the key industries ; and if they are to be owned and operated by the State, the danger of centralization of authority and therefore dictatorship and the risk of our being drawn into the vortex of world conflicts will remain. The world has gone too far on the path of industrialization to retrace its steps,

and what is more, it does not want to. It proposes and means to keep to the same path and go ahead. But even in the sphere of consumption industries—industries producing goods of every-day use—we have to take world factors into account and acquire for ourselves a secure place in world economy. Industrialism cannot be scrapped, it has to be mastered, and though we have to recognise the difficulties of the task and obvious dangers that are looming ahead, we have also to realize that we cannot withdraw into our national shell to live a decentralized existence of our own. The simple and all-pervasive fact is that the way out is economic and social co-operation on a world scale or else disintegration and wholesale destruction of wealth, life and values will follow and darkness deeper than death supervene, if not all at once, by a succession of two or three stages. No one can be unduly optimistic about the outlook for international co-operation. The approaching end of the war is casting long and ominous shadows ahead and we cannot but heed their warning and temper our hopes with a realistic view of the existing situation and its possibilities.

The position, however, does not settle itself merely by taking note of the decisive importance of world factors. We have to keep in mind the social consequences of industrialism and devise methods by which it can become our servant rather than our master. Industrialism is not mechanization. Machines are made and used by men and the evils of industrialization are due to the failure of men and not of machines. The latter not only are made by men but are man's intelligence at work—his spirit which has by understanding nature learnt to use it for his ends. It is the ends that are at fault—it is the spirit which has mastered nature that has to acquire mastery over man. The problem is social and not technical, and technique of production should and can be used to free man for creative life at a high plane of existence. Power production is substitute for human power in order that man, who is essentially spiritual, may not continue to be the slave of unremitting struggle for existence and his latent possibilities may be realized for self-expression and spiritual adventures in individual and social spheres. This is the faith of those who believe in mechanization as an instrument of freedom and progress and has inspired socialistic thought at its best. It is not a materialistic point of view. It is an affirmation and not a denial of the

highest values of life. It is a call to man to acquire self-mastery for mastering the technique of power production, and using it for the fulfilment of life and not its frustration. This process is, it is now clear, going to take time and involves profound social and therefore spiritual changes. In carrying it out we are up against the inertia of the men in power who are obsessed by their own interest and are resisting changes without which man's mastery over himself—i.e., his social relations and institutions—cannot be established. Hence class struggle and social strife and confusion in thought and practice owing to our inability to rise above the obsolete habits of thought and action. Realization of personality as the supreme value of life through introducing a new social purpose in production is being hampered by this social short-sightedness and the result is, as stated above, use of the power of knowledge and potentially fruitful technique for anti-social ends. Economic revolution is fundamentally a revolution of spirit—self-enlightenment on a grand scale in order that we may re-order our life—both individual and social—for the pursuit of goodness, truth and beauty.

Mechanization is, therefore, not a debasing ideal and can and should be ennobling. But as social adjustments necessary for making the most of it cannot be made all at once, we have to proceed with mechanization at a pace and in a manner as to avoid the infliction of unmerited misery on those who have so far relied mostly on the use of human power with the help of simple tools to earn their living and live their life on such meagre income as their work brings them. In other words, we must so mechanize our system of production that the change will not throw out of work millions of men for whom otherwise a different and better provision has not been made. Our craftsmen have suffered in the past untold misery by their exposure to the competition of machine-made goods from outside the country. But in the last two decades competition of home industry has for them become a more serious menace and will grow in severity if measures are not taken to regulate the industrialization of the country with a view to safeguard their position. Transitional measures will be necessary and in the interim period, which is likely to be long, we will have to delimit the spheres of production and reserve for our craftsmen sectors of our economic life in which they can be sheltered against the competition of large-scale industries within the

country. As far as possible the state will have to organize them for satisfying needs directly. There will have to be promoted a certain measure of regional self-sufficiency on barter basis. But in the production of staple goods for the market the small producer will always be at a disadvantage in comparison with the large-scale producer ; and as he cannot be protected for all time, eventually the production of these goods will have to be taken over by large-scale industries. Artistic handicrafts are however in a class by themselves and can maintain and even develop their position if they are properly directed and adequately assisted by the state. They are a part of our social heritage and have to be preserved for aesthetic and cultural reason, but made more progressive than they have been in the past.

Small-scale industries, during the transition period and later, will need large measure of state assistance and supervision. To-day workers in these industries are more underpaid and over-worked than the workers in organized industries. Owing to their being scattered over a large area and their limited means, they are not in a position to organize themselves for self-protection and are being exploited very badly. The A. I. S. A. has attempted to protect the hand-spinner and weaver and do their marketing. The organizers of the A. I. S. A. are working with a missionary zeal and rare devotion to duty. It is necessary to develop and provide public organization for all other small industries whose survival may be desirable for transitional period or for all time. Unorganized small industries have no future in this country. They cannot be efficient and healthy without organization and the organization must have the good of the producers at heart. The middleman who is out to make money for himself will always take unfair advantage of the producer. Even if a co-operative organization takes charge of their affairs and promotes their interests, its organizers will have to be men of high public spirit and their work will have to be a vocation to them and not merely a means of livelihood. That means that the continued existence of these industries will also depend upon a large degree of socialization, i.e., creation of an organization imbued with a sense of public duty and high regard for the interest of the community. The days of decentralized, individualistic production are over even for the small-scale producer. Both from the point of view of his interest and functions he has to develop habits and instruments of corporate action and throw up

leaders of high ability and character to ensure for him a place of security and social utility in the economic system of the future.

These organizations will have to be, as stated above, public corporations in different forms. Public corporations have, as a matter of fact, to play a role of increasing importance in planned economy in all countries. The Bombay Planners have suggested that in all state-owned enterprises the industries should be managed by public corporations. This is a very sound suggestion and merits serious consideration. The advantages of this form of organization for public enterprises is that it is intended to combine technical knowledge and experience, flexibility and a high standard of efficiency with a regard for public good, and exclude the intrusion of elements into economic administration irrelevant to or incompatible with it. This organization has to be autonomous within well-defined limits and though it should be amenable to public control and responsive to public opinion, "politics" in the limited sense has to be taken out of its policies and administration. This form has been widely adopted lately and in India is represented, though with reservations arising out of the dominance of British interests in the whole field of administration in this country, by the Reserve Bank and the Railway Board. It is desirable that public corporations should be experimented with and tenets of policy and rules of administration evolved suitable to the industries organized in this form. But in all public corporations it has to be ensured that they are truly public, i.e., in their policy and practice, they pursue and safeguard public interests and are not private monopolies in disguise armed with public authority. In a number of so-called public corporations in other countries private interests are still in control of the situation and under the cloak of public good are working for private ends. The existence of private monopolies in economic life is a serious handicap for the development of genuine public corporations. In India this consideration is particularly important owing to the trustification of our organized industries through the working of the managing agency system and special care would be necessary to prevent public corporations being controlled or dominated virtually by sectional interests.

So far nothing has been said about planning in agriculture which really is and must be the most important part of economic planning in India. Agriculture being the mainstay of our economic

life and most of our people being agriculturists, planned development of agriculture is and cannot but be of vital importance for the economic development of the country. The Bombay Plan proposes to eliminate the rent-receiving class—the landlords—and make the cultivator the owner in direct contact with the state. It also provides improvement of agricultural technique by the application of science to agriculture, development of irrigation, conservation and reclamation of land and promotion of agricultural research. All these proposals are unexceptionable in themselves, but leave the problem of small and fragmented holdings—which is the most important problem of agriculture—untouched. Co-operative farming is the remedy suggested by them for remedying this most serious evil, but it has been barely mentioned and very little has been said regarding the measures necessary for actual introduction of co-operative farming. It has to be realized that the scope for improvement of agricultural technique will be strictly limited in this country unless the twin problems of agrarian relations and dwarf holdings split into tiny strips are solved. These problems are fundamental and agriculture will remain a stagnant, if not decadent, industry unless a solution is found for them. The Bombay Planners propose to eliminate the landlords in the first instance by taking over the collection of rents for them and paying them net rental after deducting expenses and later buying them out by paying compensation. This procedure is likely to give good results and cause minimum dislocation in our rural economy and can be commended on that account. The only difficulty which is likely to arise in its adoption is that incidence of rents varies within wide limits and has no relation to the difference in productivity of land and paying capacity of tenants ; and as soon as the state steps into the landlords' shoes and assumes responsibility for the collection of rents, these variations of rents are bound to become more obvious and unjustifiable and clamant demand for the redress of this real grievance will be made and it will be difficult for a democratic government to resist it. It would be desirable for the state to undertake the admittedly difficult task of standardization of rents or at least removal of the more glaring anomalies before it assumes the responsibility for becoming the universal landlord. But the evil of small holdings presents greater difficulties, for over a large part of arable area the tenant is in effect part-proprietor now and cannot be deprived of his

rights. Any scheme of large-scale farming has to reckon with him and his passionate attachment to his tiny plot of land. In other words, property rights of the cultivator have to be respected and co-operative farming has to be introduced without causing any serious apprehension in his mind. One essential condition of the success of co-operative farming is willing co-operation of these extremely petty proprietors. The question deserves much more than a passing reference and has to be given serious and detailed consideration in any scheme for agricultural development. Peasant proprietorship is no alternative to the scheme. A peasant proprietor must at least have an economic holding, i.e., he must get a living wage from its cultivation and find in it full-time occupation for himself, his family-labour and his cattle and scope for the application of progressive technique. Even if it is granted that on the average at least a ten-acre holding will be economic in this sense of the word, there is room for only 20 million* cultivating families of peasant proprietors on this basis and at present there are about 60 million families on the land. The problem is extremely difficult, but has to be faced. It is easy to ignore the problem and concentrate on measures of technical improvement, but importance of the problem does not become any the less on that account. The solution of this problem must be regarded a pivotal point in all schemes of economic development of the country and its cardinal importance has not only to be appreciated but made the basis of all policies which are meant to be put into effect and expected to yield results. It may be repeated that all escapist devices are not only futile but dangerous. They will bring their nemesis in disillusionment and unhealthy re-action.

Planning in India on the lines indicated in the Bombay Plan and most other plans must mean an economic and social revolution and, therefore, even if it is peaceful—and every attempt should be made to keep it so—it requires a truly revolutionary fervour and driving power to carry it out. Revolutions are never accomplished in laboratories, research institutes and administrative bureaus. They need popular resurgence and enthusiasm based upon a social vision and inspiring purpose. For this we need not only our own government

* The total cultivable area of India is a little over 200 millions of acres. Most of the so-called cultivable waste is really uncultivable.

with full powers but a party of action which can rally public enthusiasm, and is in living contact with the masses and their needs. Such a party does not exist at present in India and will have to be organized and made effective even after the political deadlock has been resolved and full self-government established. Communal differences are a serious difficulty, but lack of cohesion and unity of purpose among the progressive elements of our national life are much more so. The so-called Left forces in India are hopelessly divided, and unless they learn the lesson of the fatal Left disunity in Europe and elsewhere before the war, it will be easy to hang them separately because they are incapable of hanging together. The outlook for successful planning in India is therefore not at all bright or hopeful. And yet plans for the future have to be made, discussed and prepared for. The end of the war will find the world and India in a great crisis. It is possible that it may find us wanting and unequal to the task which it will present in its imperious urgency. But it is also possible—may be likely—that it will call up reserves of will, understanding and drive, the existence of which has to be assumed but cannot be proved. Planning at present has to be an act of faith—a belief in ourselves and our ability to rise to the height of the occasion in the crisis that is coming upon the world. The crises have their own logic and sanctions but can only be overcome and mastered for constructive ends by a conscious purpose which transcends personal interests combined with the will to put it into effect. Such a purpose we have to develop as best and as fast as we can in this country, for otherwise with the world on the march, we shall find ourselves in a slough of despond and unable to take action to get out of it.



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WHEN THE POET READ HIS VERSES

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

WHEN the poet read his verses
 at the royal court
before the men of learning
 and of high distinction,
the courtiers and scholars
 loudly acclaimed his praise
while the prince crowned him
 with a jewelled wreath.

The day wore on to evening,
 and the poet as he walked back home
 through the town ahum with his name,
he saw at some wayside window
 the bride sitting still
 with a champak chain
 before her on a lotus leaf.
The poet sighed and murmured,
 “This is not for me”.

[The author's own rendering of his Bengali poem, *Banchita* (3. 12. 38), published in *Ākāś-pradīp*, 1939. In the MS. the translation faces the original.]

*

"ABOVE ALL ELSE"*

A SHORT STORY

By ANNADA SANKAR RAY

"So you see what sort of a country yours is," concluded my friend's wife, "Hundreds and thousands of fine fellows gave up their lives, not for their motherland, but crying for a little rice. If, knowing death certain, they had died in the name of the country might not a revolution—"

"Sssh ! Quiet !" My friend stopped her, shut the windows and turned on the electric fan.

Something was gripping my throat. Noticing that my difficulty in speaking was not removed even by the closing of the room my friend remarked, "You're feeling uncomfortable in the heat, aren't you ?"

"I'm feeling uncomfortable," I answered, "but not because of the heat. There's another reason."

"May I hear it ?" Asked his wife.

"I've just thought of a story." I said, "Shall I tell it ?"

"Of course." She assented.

Re-opening the windows my friend breathed again, "There ! A story ! What a relief !" And my throat also was released.

On the day I entered college Boku Biswas took admittance in the same class. His proper name was Biraj Mohan. From the very first day we were friends. The reason may have been that both of us had passed in the second division though we deserved even better than the first. The Non-co-operation movement was at its height, neither of us had studied and it was only at the insistence of our elders that we sat for the examination. No one acknowledged the sacrifice we had made for the country in facing the ignominy of the second division ; only we two admitted it.

By temperament we were not similar. Boku was a first-rate conversationalist while I have always been reticent. Boku gradually drew away from me and I did not languish in his absence, for I had set myself the task of wiping out the disgrace of that second division.

* "Above all else Man is Truth. No greater truth is there."—Quotation from the famous Vaishnava poet, Chandidas.

One day I heard that Boku had responded to the call of Deshbandhu C. R. Das and entered the temple of nationalism, that is, a British prison. I felt ashamed for myself and proud for Boku.

Afterwards he changed colleges and the thread of our friendship was lost.

We met again in England. There he was a different person. In India he used to go about with tousled hair and a pair of broken spectacles. He would play a rough game of hockey wearing them. The boys of his age dubbed him affectionately 'Boku Bob.' Most of the time he wore a *lungi* and a short-sleeved shirt, both of *khaddar*. He may have had a cap too ; I don't remember. In England he was a full-fledged Sahib. When he dressed for sports and went to play tennis he looked like some Indian prince.

We envied him the large number of his English friends. For all old Chanakya said learning does not command homage nowadays. The homage goes to the sportsman.

In reply to my remonstrance Boku said, "See here, am I friendly with them only because they're English ? No, they are men. Men have classifications but they are above them. Men belong to different religions but they are superior to any. Men are variously coloured but they are finer than their skin. When a whole Man comes and stands in front of me I forget that he is English and I am Bengalee, that he is Christian and I am Hindu. He is a Man and I am too. For that matter, don't I associate as much with you ?"

That was true. It was not that Boku neglected us. He made no distinction between his own kind and others ; we did. We misunderstood him and used to say that coming to England had turned his head. From a lover of his country he had become a lover of the world. Whenever I saw him I used to tease him with, "Well, how are you, old Internationalist Biswas ?"

Boku would answer, "Now then, Nationalist Ray, I'm fine."

Boku came back a barrister and settled at Patna. I live in Bengal. We do not meet. I supposed Boku was as anglicised as ever but to my surprise I heard he had offered civil disobedience and gone to jail. Again I felt ashamed of myself and proud for him.

The practice Boku acquired after his release surpassed expectations. People from Patna said he was well established. What if his name, Boku, means stupid ! I heard he was as open-hearted and

friendly as ever. He had not married. What he earned he spent with both hands. All sorts of people professing all sorts of creeds slept and ate at his house month after month. He never let anyone he got hold of go, whether he be Mahatma Gandhi or Janab Jinnah. "Aiye hazrat, tashrif laiye," was constantly on his lips.

In politics he was a Leftist. He said so plainly at meetings. When his co-workers were put out he said, "International Socialism is greater than Indian Nationalism."

Such was Boku. And he had an English friend named Jennings who was very dear to him. Jennings worked for a London newspaper. Boku had invited him to visit the country before leaving London and written often afterwards renewing his invitation. Jennings had not had the opportunity to come. During this war he got it.

When Cripps came to India with proposals for a settlement Jennings came as a special correspondent. After Cripps left he stayed on to study the situation. Boku brought him to Patna and entertained him for a whole fortnight. He had much to tell him about politics.

From Patna Jennings went to Calcutta and from Calcutta to several other places. Then he returned to Patna to take leave of Boku. But this time he did not stay with him. He went instead to the house of an English friend.

Boku asked, "Why? Tell me."

"Am I obliged to?" He answered.

"No, no," said Boku, "Why should you be obliged to? You need not."

"It's not my fault," he said thickly, "but I won't say whose fault it is. Don't mind, Boku."

"I won't mind, Phil."

They saw each other as before. But there was a hitch somewhere. One day it came out in their conversation.

Jennings said, "Your leaders are clutching at a shadow. 'Quit India!' If we really quit what would happen? Who would stop Japan?"

"In order to stop Japan," Boku explained, "the first essential is a sense of responsibility. For various reasons the people of this country don't want to shoulder responsibility. To make them shoulder

it, responsibility must change hands. 'Quit India' means just this much and no more."

"Well and good. Take responsibility. But will you be able to keep it when you get it? If it were so easy would China be so wretched?"

"What is the harm in trying?"

"This is no time for any such experiments, Boku. You will gain only two or three months' independence by getting rid of those who know how to handle responsibility. Then two to three centuries of subjugation."

Boku's heart was burning. "Who knows? We may keep independent two or three centuries."

"Without our help?"

"With your help."

"Nonsense. I thought you were a realist." He grew angry. "China at least has a leader like Chiang Kai-Shek. Who have you?"

Boku replied, "Pandit Nehru."

"Oh! That great pundit!" His tone was contemptuous, as though he were speaking of some pedant in a Sanskrit school.

Boku could contain himself no longer. He spoke out, "Well, I've never heard that Stalin studied military tactics. Will not those who address him so respectfully as 'Marshal Stalin', 'Marshal Stalin', be able to say 'General Nehru'?"

"Ha, ha! General Nehru!" Jennings mocked, "That means defeat on the very first day. My dear Boku, I thought you were a realist."

Boku gave as good as he got, "My dear Phil, I realise you are an imperialist."

Taking his hand Philip said, "Forgive me if I am rude. But I can't understand how you can survive a single day without us. So I suspect you intend to come to terms with Japan."

Boku withdrew his hand. "Good-bye," he said slightly.

Some days later August came. Rounding up was begun. Boku too was arrested. There is no use describing the things that happened after that. It will be enough to say that our mutual friend, Hardip Singh, was cruelly murdered by a mob. And several other friends with their families barely escaped being killed. From that time on they were so incensed that they scented violence at the very

mention of Gandhi and conspiracy in the name of Congress. They said the leaders were well off comfortably lodged in jail; still it would be wiser for them to acknowledge their mistake and come back.

Boku's release put him in a difficult situation. There was nothing to be done, yet everybody said, "Do something, Boku Bob."

Though he was in good health Boku got newspapers to publish a report that he was suffering from a number of ailments and had to go to the Himalayas for a change. A mountain abode is preferable to the abode of death. His followers were silenced.

While preparations were being made for his journey a Muslim friend became his guest. Employed in a government department he toured the whole of India.

Ali was as sociable as Boku. He stayed eight instead of four days and Boku kept postponing the date of his departure. It even seemed a change might not be necessary. Good food and talk appeared to be adding years to his life.

But he was unlucky. Just about that time Gandhiji fasted. And Boku also lost his appetite. Ali likewise, forgetful of his pleasure, sat about morosely. Not that he was very pleased with Gandhi, but the thought that Gandhi might go and India remain brought tears to his eyes. He said to Boku, "However wrong he may be, can we live without him?"

When no order came for his release Boku broke down under the grief of his certain death, even though he had often enough suspected Gandhi of being the friend of the rich and nothing to the workers. Ali could not proceed to Patna leaving his friend in such a state. So he stayed on to keep him company.

He fumed against the English even more than Boku. A tin of cigarettes was consumed an hour. But what he said in the end gave Boku a violent start.

"Pakistan. There's no other way but Pakistan."

"How do you get that?"

"How do I get that? If Hindus and Mussalmans with one voice were to say today, 'We want Gandhiji freed!' who is strong enough to keep him captive?"

"Then why don't they say so?"

"Why should they? They will if they get Pakistan."

Boku was thunderstruck.

"Perhaps you think Mussalmans are taking advantage of your difficulty to cry up their price but don't forget you did the same when the English were in the worst of difficulties. Quit India ! That is the way of politics. What's to be done ?"

"What do you know of politics !" Boku replied, "History will decide whether we were crying up our price or trying to save the country."

Argument arose. "It's most regrettable," said Ali, "Gandhiji will die without giving us our Pakistan. Such obstinacy ! How can Hindus and Mussalmans unite ! How can you drive out the English ! It seems to me independence will never come !"

"But how can you keep Pakistan if you get it ? What if the Japs come from one direction and the Russians from the other ?"

"You make me laugh." Ali laughed aloud. "If Hindus and Mussalmans are on good terms your sepoy will fight for us, like American sepoy is fighting for the English. If the Americans can fight in North Africa the Hindus can fight in Baluchistan and Assam."

"That's so. But if the country is split into two halves the Hindus will be broken-hearted. They can only fight if their hearts are whole and stout. You don't know us, friend."

Ali gave it up saying, "Then Gandhiji cannot be saved. Neither is there any hope of independence."

This time Boku repeated what Jennings had said to him, "My dear Ali, I thought you were a realist."

Ali answered, "I see you're a junior partner of the British imperialists. You're a Hindu imperialist."

Boku felt like exclaiming as Sita had, "Take me back, Mother Earth !" But he said not a word. He gave up talking.

I arrived in Almora several months after Boku. All this I heard from him there. He had nothing particular to do ; I also was on a holiday. One day I asked him, "All right, tell me, do you still believe that Man is greater than his religion, greater than his race ?"

"I want to believe it. But who lets me ?" Boku said regretfully. "Of those I loved as men one is not a man but an Englishman, and another is not a man but a Mussalman." With this he shrank into himself.

When my story was done my friend's wife commented, "Really,

I don't think independence will ever come. Such a terrible famine swept over us and we are more helpless than ever."

"Be quiet !" exclaimed my friend and glanced at the window. He has a terror of spies.

"Tell me," I said, "which is the bigger tragedy ? Famine or dissension ?"

"Famine certainly."

"No, the greater tragedy is that thirty crores of Hindus can not agree with five crores of English and ten crores of Mohammedans. I see no indication that they ever will. This war has grown out of just such a dissension. For twenty years it smouldered ; then one day fire broke out. I do not know when it will be extinguished. And the putting out of one fire brings no peace ; I already see indications of another."

My friend shuddered. His wife said, "That's just like you."

"Forget it. Don't let me disturb your dream of happiness. But the dream of my friend was broken. Now of course he has concentrated on his practice. But he cannot forget that Man is no more. Englishman, Mussalman, German, Jap-man—you have these instead. Which is the bigger tragedy ? That Man should pass away or men die ?"

Translated from the original Bengali, by Lila Ray.

NATIR PUJA

THE DANCING GIRL'S WORSHIP

A Drama by Rabindranath Tagore

Translated from the original Bengali by Marjorie Sykes.

[NATIR PUJA was originally written and published in 1926. It was first staged in Calcutta in January 1927. In the same year an English translation by the author was published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (Old Series). The story is based on an old Buddhist legend. For a critical appreciation of the play see Vol. VIII, part 4 (1943) of this journal, which also contains reproductions of a wall-painting by Nandalal Bose illustrating the story.

The aim of the present translation, which was originally undertaken with the permission of the author, is two-fold : to make the English text as faithful to the original as possible, and to render the dialogue in simple and colloquial English so as to make it suitable for stage representation by students whose access to the play is limited to its English version. The translator wishes to acknowledge her debt to the author's own previous rendering as well as to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty for his valuable help and suggestions. Some songs which could not be translated have been omitted.

The author's own translation referred to above was prefaced by a brief description of the situation with which the play opens. For the interest of the readers we reproduce it below.—*Ed.*]

THE SITUATION

The Lord Buddha once took his seat under an Asoka tree in the palace garden of King Bimbisara, of Magadha, and preached therefrom. On that sacred spot the king, who had become his devotee, established an altar and enjoined the princesses of his house to place thereon every evening daily offerings of worship.

Finding, later, that Prince Ajatasatru covets his father's throne, King Bimbisara has voluntarily abdicated in his son's favour and dwells at a distance from the Royal City.

Queen Lokeshvari, at first also a devotee of the new religion now burns under a sense of wrong at her husband's abdication and the renunciation of the world by her own son, Prince Chitra, and she fain would turn against the religion of Buddha's teaching.

THE PROLOGUE

UPALI *the Bhikshu*¹ enters singing.

Upali [*Calling*] Who is there ? Alms, give me alms, in the name of the Lord Buddha.

SRIMATI, *the palace dancing-girl*, enters and greets him reverently.

Upali. [*Blessing her*] May all prosperity be yours ! Who are you, my child ?

Srimati. I am the palace dancing-girl here.

Upali. Are you the only one awake today in all this city ?

Srimati. All the princesses are still asleep.

Upali. I have come for alms, in the name of the Lord Buddha.

Srimati. Then with your leave, Prabhu², I'll go and call the princesses.

Upali. Today I have come to *you* for alms.

Srimati. To me ?—But I am so poor ! In your alms-bowl anything that I could give would seem so mean. What can I give, tell me ?

Upali. Your best gift.

Srimati. What is my best gift ? I do not even know that.

Upali. No, but the grace of the Lord is upon you. He knows.

Srimati. O Sir, then may He Himself take whatever I have.

Upali. Indeed He will take it, child. He will accept the flowers of your worship. Spring, the king of the seasons, touches the flowering woods—he himself awakens them to sacrifice. For you too the appointed day is at hand. I came to tell you so ; you are indeed blessed.

Srimati. I'll await my hour. [*She makes the sign of reverence.*
They go out.

The princesses enter.

Princesses. Prabhu, Prabhu, do not leave us so. Be pleased to accept our alms . . . O, what a shame ! He has gone !

Ratnavali. What are you all afraid of, Vasavi ? There's no dearth of folk to take alms. It's the givers who are rare.

Nanda. No, Ratna. To find one to take the offering, much merit must be earned. Today is lost to us. [*They go out.*

¹ A Buddhist mendicant monk.

² *Lit.*, lord, master. A reverential form of address.

ACT ONE

The Palace Garden at Magadha.

The Queen-Mother LOKESVARI *enters with the Bhikshuni*¹ UTPALAPARNA.

Lokesvari. So the Maharaja Bimbisara remembers² me ?

Bhikshuni. Yes, that is my message.

Lokesvari. Today he worships at his altar beneath the *asoka* tree. That is why he remembers, I suppose ?

Bhikshuni. To-night is Vasanta Purnima—the full moon of spring.

Lokesvari. And so they worship—*whom* do they worship ?

Bhikshuni. Why, today is the Lord Buddha's birthday³—it's *His* festival.

Lokesvari. Go tell my husband that my worship is finished and done with. Other people may offer their flowers and lamps ; I've emptied my whole world.

Bhikshuni. What are you saying, Maharani ?

Lokesvari. My only son, my prince, my Chitra—they've lured him away and made a monk of him, and now they ask me for an offering ! They cut the root of the creeper and then they ask for flowers.

Bhikshuni. You have given him away, but you have not lost him. Once you held him in your arms ; today you may still hold him—in the whole world.

Lokesvari. Have you a son of your own, woman ?

Bhikshuni. No.

Lokesvari. Have you ever had one ?

Bhikshuni. No, I was widowed when a child.

Lokesvari. Then be silent ; talk not of things which you cannot understand.

Bhikshuni. Maharani, it was you who first welcomed the true religion into the palace courts. Why then today . . .

Lokesvari. Ah, so they still remember that ! I'm surprised, I thought your Master had forgotten it. Every day I used to call

¹ A mendicant Buddhist nun.

² The Sanskrit word *remember*, when used of a highly-placed person, has the significance of *asks to see, sends for*.

³ At present the birthday of the Buddha falls on *Vaisakhi Purnima*, i. e., in summer. In the sixth century B. C., however, it fell in spring (on *Vasanta Purnima*).

the Bhikshu Dharmaruchi to read the Scriptures to me, before I would touch water. A hundred Bhikshus were fed before I broke my fast. Every year at the end of the rains it was my vow to provide every member of the Sangha with the yellow robe. That day when that enemy of Dharma, Devadatta preached, and everyone else was wavering, I alone stood firm ; I invited the Lord Tathagata here. He sat and spoke under this *asoka*, so that all heard the sacred word. O cruel and ungrateful one ! This is how I am rewarded ! Nothing has happened to *them*—to the women who hated me so fiercely and put the poison in my food. Their sons still live like princes !

Bhikshuni. One can't measure truth by this world's values, Maharani. Light is golden, but can it be weighed with gold ?

Lokesvari. You remember the day when Prince Ajatasatru cast in his lot with Devadatta. I laughed that day, fool that I was ! These men wanted to cross the sea on a broken raft, I thought. He pinned his faith to Devadatta's powers ; he hoped to become king by that means, while his father was still alive. I had no misgivings ; I boasted that the divine power of a Guru mightier even than Devadatta would bring such unholy schemes to nought. What faith I had ! I got the Lord Buddha—Sakyasingha, I mean—to come and give my husband his blessing. And yet who had the victory ?

Bhikshuni. You had. Don't turn that inward victory into a mere external thing.

Lokesvari. My victory, you call it ?

Bhikshuni. Certainly I do. King Bimbisara freely gave up his throne to the son who craved a kingdom, and he won for himself that day a kingdom that . . .

Lokesvari. Kingdom ! Empty words ! Such a kingdom is a mockery for a Kshatriya king. Look at me, see what I am today—widowed, though my husband lives ; barren, having borne a son ; homeless, in the midst of a palace ! *Those* are not empty words ! Folk who never accepted your religion make me a laughing-stock today. Go tell this to your Master, your Thunder-Spirit ! Where is He now ? Let His thunderbolt fall on their heads !

Bhikshuni. Maharani, let them laugh their fill ; all this is a fleeting dream, there is no reality in it.

Lokesvari. It's a dream, may be, but it's a dream that does not please me. I want other dreams, called wealth, and motherhood,

and honour. Those women yonder, how they flourish on such dreams, how high they hold their heads ! Go and talk to *them* ! Let *them* bring offerings for the worship !

Bhikshuni. Very well, I will go.

Lokesvari. Go, but remember, *they* are not fools, like me. *They* will lose nothing, they will keep their treasures. *They* don't believe in the Buddha ; Sakyasingha's gracious mercy has not been granted to them—luckily for them ! Well ? Why are you standing there dumb ? Pretending to be patient, are you ?

Bhikshuni. What am I to say ? Even now my inner patience fails me.

Lokesvari. Your patience is failing you, so you busy yourself with inner forgiveness of the likes of me ! The silent insolence of you people is too much ! Go ! [*The Bhikshuni is about to go, but the Queen recalls her*] Wait one moment Bhikshuni. Chitra has taken some new name, do you know what it is ?

Bhikshuni. Yes, Kusalasila.

Lokesvari. He thinks the name unclean by which his mother called him—so lightly he flings it away !

Bhikshuni. If you wish, Maharani, I could bring him to see you one day.

Lokesvari. If I wish ? O shame that I, who brought him into the world—that I should have to wish you to bring him to me !

Bhikshuni. Then have I your leave to go ?

Lokesvari. Wait a little. You see him sometimes ?

Bhikshuni. Yes.

Lokesvari. Very well, perhaps just once...if only he...no, never mind !

Bhikshuni. I will tell him. Perhaps you will see him.

[*She goes out.*]

Lokesvari. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps ! When the blood of my own veins fed his growing life, there was no perhaps in that ! His ancient debt to his mother has come down to this—a hesitating perhaps ! That's what they call *Dharma*. [*She calls*] Mallika !

MALLIKA enters.

Mallika. Maharani ?

Lokesvari. Have you heard anything of Prince Ajatasatru ?

Mallika. Yes, he has gone to fetch Devadatta. Not a remnant of the worship of the Three Jewels¹ will be left in the kingdom.

Lokesvari. The coward ! A king who dares not rule ! Surely I am a living proof how little power the Buddha's teaching has. Yet he dare not even defy that falsehood without the backing of that empty fellow Devadatta.

Mallika. Maharani, those who own much have much to fear. He has a kingdom to rule, so fear drives him to seek alliance with every power there is. When he fears he has conceded too much to Buddha's followers, he turns and propitiates Devadatta's with more still. He is trying to secure his fortune both ways.

Lokesvari. My fortune is secure enough ! then ! I have nothing to lose, so I need not stoop to seek the aid of falsehood.

Mallika. Now you are talking just like Utpalaparna the Bhikshuni. Blessed is Maharani Lokesvari, she says ; by the grace of the Lord Buddha she is freed from all ties which bind men to illusion.

Lokesvari. These catch-words only anger me. Enjoy, if you will, your stainless, empty truth—give me all my earth-stained ties again ! Then once more I would light my lamps at the altar beneath the *asoka* tree ; once more would a hundred Bhikshus be fed ; their sacred texts from end to end recited in my palace. But if that cannot be, let Devadatta come ! I care not whether he be true or false. I shall go to the watch-tower to see how near they are.

[*They go out.*

SRIMATI enters with her Vina : she spreads her carpet in the shade of a creeper and looks off-stage.

Srimati. It is time. Come, all of you.

Sings.

At dead of night, what whisper came ?

I know not, I.

Was it in waking, was it in dream ?

I know not, I.

MALATI enters.

Malati. Are you Srimati ?

Srimati. Yes, dear, what is it ?

Malati. The door-keeper told me to come to you. I want to learn to sing.

Srimati. I've never seen you in the palace before, have I ?

Malati. No, I've just come from my village. My name is Malati.

Srimati. Why did you come, child ? Didn't the days pass quickly enough there ? There you were a flower for worship, the gods were glad. Here you will deck the garland of pleasure, the evil spirits will laugh. Your spring-time will have come in vain. You've come to learn to sing, you say ? Is that all you hope for ?

Malati. May I tell you the truth ? My hope is much larger, but I am shy to speak of it.

Srimati. I see, is that it ? You hope to be a queen some day—an evil hope ! Well, perhaps you may be, if the sins of your former birth are black enough. But when the wild bird sighs for the golden cage, it's an evil spirit that sits in her wings. Go back, go while you may, it's not yet too late.

Malati. What are you telling me, sister ? I don't understand.

Srimati. This is what I say. Alas, that fetters should beguile you seeming ornaments ; alas, that death should bewitch you, seeming beauty.¹

Malati. No, you don't understand at all ; I'll tell you plainly. I've heard that one day the Lord Buddha visited this garden, this *asoka* tree. King Bimbisara built an altar there, didn't he ?

Srimati. Yes, that is so.

Malati. And the princesses make offerings there every evening. If that is not allowed me, may I not sweep the place and keep it clean ? That was my hope when I joined the singing girls.

Srimati. Welcome, sister, I am glad. The lamps of worship in the hands of the princesses give more smoke than light ; they have been waiting for the touch of your innocent hands. But who put the thought into your mind ?

Malati. How can I tell you, sister ? There's a voice like fire in every wind today. Only the other day my brother heard it and went. He is eighteen years old. I held him by the hand and asked him where he was going, and he said, "To seek for it."

Srimati. The sea is calling with one voice to the waves of every river, and the moon is at the full. [*Taking Malati's hand*] What's

1 This speech represents a song in the original.

this ? A ring on your finger ? Has my flower of paradise been sold like common dust ?

Malati. I will tell you everything, you will understand.

Srimati. Yes, I know what it is to grieve, and so I understand.

Malati. He was rich, we were poor. I used to watch him silently, from a distance. One day he came to our house and said that he loved me. My father said, "Malati is fortunate." When all the preparations were finished he came to our door. He was dressed as a Bhikshu, not as a bridegroom. A saffron robe, and a staff in his hand. He said to me, "If ever we meet, it will not be here, but upon the Path of *Mukti*." Sister, don't be angry with me. Even now the tears come, for my heart is very weak.

Srimati. Let the tears fall, my child. They will lay the dust on your Path of *Mukti*.

Malati. I bowed to him and said, "My bonds are not yet loosed. Give me the ring you promised." This is the ring he gave me. When it falls from my finger before the altar of the Lord, we shall meet again on the Path of *Mukti*.

Srimati. How many women in these days have broken the homes they once built up ! How many have put on the saffron robe and taken the road ! Is it the Way that draws them, or the Wayfarer—who knows ? Many and many a time I have lifted my hands and prayed with all my soul to the Great One, that He would not remain unmoved. He has set flowing in every home the flood of women's tears, may He grant them peace ! Look, here come the princesses.

Enter VASAVI, NANDA, RATNAVALI, AJITA, MALLIKA and BHADRA.

Vasavi. Why, who is this child ? See how she has piled up her hair, and stuck a *jaba* flower over her ear. Look, Nanda, how she has woven *akanda* flowers into the plaits. And see that necklace of scarlet seeds ? Where did she come from, Srimati ?

Srimati. From her village. Her name is Malati.

Ratnavali. A fine catch, to be sure ! You'll make a disciple of her, I suppose ? You couldn't save *our* souls, so you get hold of a village girl, and palm off your salvation on her.

Srimati. I've no anxiety about the salvation of village girls, princess. Heaven's handiwork there is not hidden, either by dust or ornaments, so Heaven knows them for its own.

Ratnavali. Sooner than go to Heaven through *your* preaching, I'd rather not go there at all !

Nanda. I say Ajita, why should she always tease poor Srimati so ? Srimati never preaches.

Vasavi. O, but there's a world of preaching in her silence. See how she's smiling now,—isn't that a sermon in itself ?

Ratnavali. O, a marvellous sermon ! I'll tell you what it means—"Let the bitter be overcome by the sweet, and words by smiles."

Vasavi. Why don't you answer back a bit, Srimati ? Your gentleness is past all bearing. It's far better to make people angry than to make them ashamed.

Srimati. If I were really good at heart I could afford to make a show of being bad. The full moon can afford to show her shadows. But what if the moonless night were to cover itself in cloud ?

Ajita. See how bewildered our village girl looks. She must be thinking that the tongues of palace girls are sharper than they are sweet. What is your name ? I've forgotten.

Malati. Malati.

Ajita. Tell us what you were thinking, do.

Malati. I was feeling a little hurt, because I love my sister.

Ajita. It's a trick of ours to hurt those we love. That is one of the rules of palace rhetoric. Make a note of it !

Bhadra. You were going to say something more, Malati. Do tell us. I'm longing to know what you think of us.

Malati. I was going to say, "Sakes alive honey¹, how you love to hear yourselves talk ! You're missing a chance of music."

[*All the princesses laugh loudly.*]

Vasavi. Sakes alive, honey, sakes alive ! We must call the palace grammar-master ! Here's a new interjection for him !

Ratnavali. Sakes alive, Vasavi ! Sakes alive, honey—thou jewel in the royal crown !

Vasavi. Sakes alive, Ratnavali ! Sakes alive, honey, thou moon of enchanting beauty ! What a new wealth of language !

Malati. Sister, are they angry with me ?

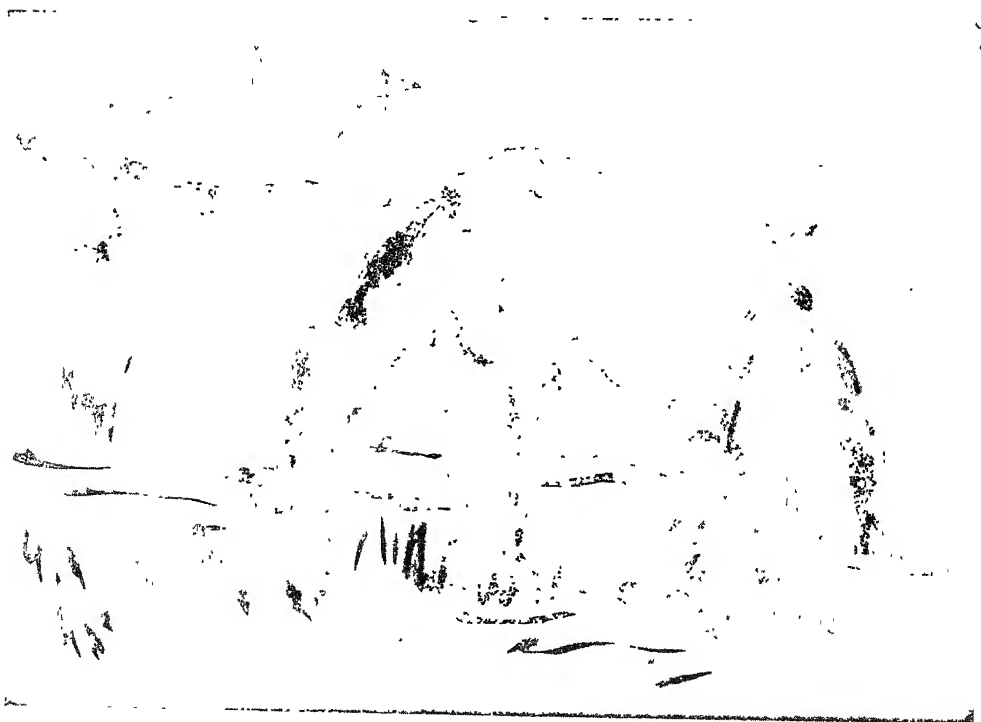
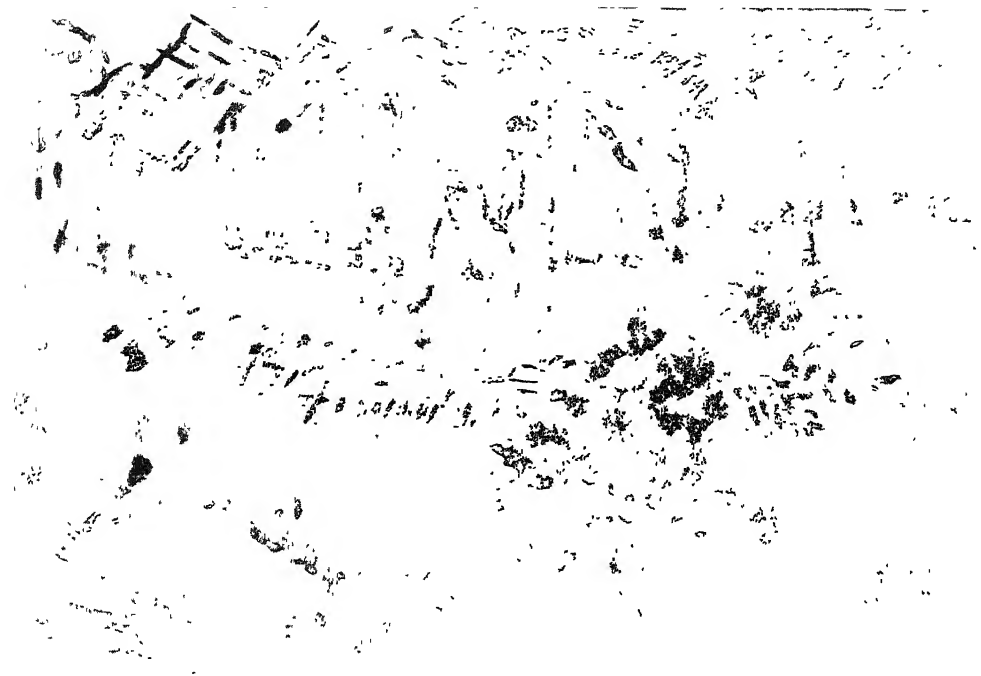
Nanda. Don't be afraid, Malati. When the sky-nymphs send

¹ The original word *Hāngā* is untranslatable. It is a rustic interjection which sounds amusing to the palace-bred princesses and causes much ironic merriment.



Sketches by Nandalal Bose

Rajgriha, Dec 1944.



hail on the *shiuli* flowers, they are not angry. That is their way of caressing them.

Ajita. See, Sreemati has a song, in her mind. She doesn't hear a word we are saying. Sing to us, Srimati : we will listen.

SRIMATI *sings*

At dead of night, what whisper came ?
 I know not, I.
 Was it in waking, was it in dream ?
 I know not, I.
 I bend to common tasks of home,
 I wander down the open ways ;
 What secret word that bids me come
 Haunts all the traffic of the days ?
 I know not, I.
 Fear or triumph or nameless pain ?
 A word that whispers "Never again."
 Is it in my heart, or the heavens on high ?—
 I know not, I.

Vasavi. Malati, your eyes are full of tears. What was it in the song that touched you ?

Malati. Srimati has heard the Call.

Vasavi. What call ?

Malati. The call that set my brother wandering, the call that my [*She breaks off.*]

Vasavi. Your what ?

Srimati. Hush, Malati dear, don't say any more. Dry your eyes, this is no place for weeping.

Vasavi. Why did you stop her, Srimati ? Do you think we only know how to laugh ?

Bhadra. Don't we know there are places which laughter does not reach ?

Malati. Princesses, there's a voice in every wind today. Have't you heard ?

Nanda. No, child. The petals of the lotus open to the morning light, but not the walls of the palace.

[LOKESVARI enters. *All make obeisance.*

Lokesvari. I can't bear it ! There ! Don't you hear it ?—that chant of praise along the roads : *Salutation to the Buddha, who teaches ! Salutation to the Sangha, which is supreme !* Alas, it can still stir my heart. [*Stopping her ears*] It must be stopped, this very day, now, at once.

Mallika. Calm yourself, my Lady.

Lokesvari. How can I calm myself ? Which text will you give me, this one ? *Salutation to the Supreme Peace, the Supreme Mercy !* No, never, never again. This is my text now : *Salutation to the terrible goddess of angry lightning ! Salutation to . . .* Through strife, through fire, through bloodshed, the earth will find its peace. For otherwise the son will leave his mother's arms, and the king in his splendour will drop like a withered leaf from his throne. What are you doing here, maidens ?

Ratnavali. [*Laughing*] We are waiting for salvation. We're purifying our sinful minds and are well on the way to become Srimati's disciples.

Vasavi. You shouldn't talk so flippantly.

Lokesvari. This dancing-girl's disciples ? Yes, that's what this religion leads to. The fallen come preaching salvation ! Srimati has suddenly become a saint now, has she ? When Lord Buddha came to our garden and everyone in the palace came to see him, I sent for her too, out of pity. The wretched girl refused to come. And now, it seems, when the Bhikshu Upali comes for alms, he avoids our princesses, and receives them only at her hands. O what fools you are ! You are of royal blood, yet you are set on welcoming this religion—this religion that will drag your proud throne in the dust. Beggars will rule henceforth from the thrones of kings ! Do you call that the true religion, you suicides ? [*To SRIMATI*] What holy text did Upali give you at your initiation, dancing girl ? Let me hear it. Let me see how far you will dare to go. Your sinful tongue ought to be struck dumb.

Srimati. [*Standing up and folding her hands*

Salutation to the Buddha who teaches !

Salutation to the Dhamma that saves !

Salutation to the Sangha which is supreme !

Lokesvari. [*Joining in*] *Salutation to the Buddha who teaches . . .*
No, no, enough.

Srimati. *O thou who hast pity on my orphaned self . . .*

Lokesvari. [*Beating her breast*] *O, my orphaned self ! Srimati,*
do recite—the Lord most compassionate . . .

Srimati and Lokesvari. *For the sake of all sinners the Lord most*
compassionate achieved the supreme virtues and attained the supreme
enlightenment.

Lokesvari. Stop, stop, no more of that, that's over now. *Salu-*
tation to the terrible goddess of angry lightning ! [*An attendant enters.*

Attendant. [*Beckoning Lokesvari aside*] Maharani, Prince
Chitra has come to visit his mother.

Lokesvari. Who says this religion is false ? As soon as the
sacred text was chanted, the evil vanished ! You unbelievers, you
laughed in secret at my misery—but look at the power of His grace,
that “most merciful Lord” ; it can melt a stone ! Mark my words,
I shall have my son again, I shall have my throne again ! As for
those who insulted the Lord, we shall see how long their arrogance
will endure. *My refuge is in the Buddha ! My refuge is in the Dhamma !*
My refuge is in the Sangha ! [*As she speaks, she goes out with the attendant.*

Ratnavali. Which way does the wind blow now, Mallika ?

Mallika. The sky nowadays is full of winds run mad. There's
no telling which way they will come, or who will be whirled away.
There's that Kalandak who has done nothing but gamble for forty
years, he's suddenly turned monk, I hear. Nandibardhan too, who
used to promise to give all he had for sacrifice—nowadays he beats up
every Brahmin within sight.

Ratnavali. So Prince Chitra has come back. !

Mallika. Wait and see how it all ends.

Malati. Is it true, Srimati sister, that when our Lord came,
you didn't go to see Him ?

Srimati. Yes, quite true. In His presence, to present oneself
is to present an offering. I was unclean ; the offering of my heart
was not ready for sacrifice.

Malati. O how sad, sister, how sad !

Srimati. If we go to Him so lightly, we shall go in vain. Do
we really see Him if we merely look at Him ? Do we really hear
Him, when His words fall on our outward ears alone ?

Ratnavali. Oho ! that's a hit at us, is it ? The slightest breath of indulgence blows away all this dancing girl's manners.

Srimati. My days of mere good manners are over. I'll give you no false flattery. I tell you plainly, your eyes have looked on Him, but you have never seen Him.

Ratnavali. Vasavi ! Bhadra ! How can you put up with such impertinence—from a dancing girl ?

Vasavi. If we can't put up with truth from without, we shall have to put up with falsehood from within. Srimati, chant your *mantra* once more, won't you ? My mind is full of thorns ; may it blunt their pricks !

Srimati. *Salutation to the Buddha who teaches !*

Salutation to the Dhamma that saves !

Salutation to the Sangha which is supreme !

Nanda. We went out to see the Lord ; the Lord Himself has appeared to Srimati in her own heart.

Ratnavali. Are you lost to all modesty, dancing-girl ? Aren't you going to contradict that ?

Srimati. Why should I, princess ? If He deigns to set foot in such a heart as mine, is the glory mine, or His ?

Vasavi. Enough ! Words lead only to more words. Sing to us, Srimati.

SRIMATI *sings*

Have you come to my door, my Lord,

To seek my inmost me ?

Call your call today within.

For at your call.

The hidden flowers come out on the naked branches.

At your call.

The new dawn comes with a pitcher of light in her hand,

And the deep darkness answers.

[*A Buddhist chant is heard off-stage : Salutation to the three Jewels !
Salutation to the Enlightened ! Salutation to the Great Life ! Salutation
to the Most Merciful !*

[*Enter UTPALAPARNA, All make obeisance.*

All. Your blessing, Holy Mother.

Bhikshuni. May you enjoy all blessing, may all the gods preserve

you, may good be yours for ever, by the grace of all the Buddhas.

Bhikshuni. Srimati !

Srimati. What is your command ?

Bhikshuni. Today is Vasanta Purnima—the full moon of spring. We celebrate the birth of the Lord Buddha. It will be Srimati's task to lead the rites of worship at the altar beneath the *asoka*.

Ratnavali. I cannot have heard aright. What Srimati are you speaking of ?

Bhikshuni. This Srimati, here.

Ratnavali. This palace dancing-girl ?

Bhikshuni. Yes, this dancing-girl.

Ratnavali. Did you get this from the elders ?

Bhikshuni. Yes, it is they who gave the order.

Ratnavali. Who gave the order ? What are their names ?

Bhikshuni. Upali is one.

Ratnavali. Upali—a barbar.

Bhikshuni. Another is Sunanda.

Ratnavali. He's a cowherd's son.

Bhikshuni. Another is Sunit.

Ratnavali. He's a Pukkush by caste, isn't he ?

Bhikshuni. Princess, their caste is one and the same. Theirs is an aristocracy of which you know nothing.

Ratnavali. No, indeed I don't. Perhaps this dancing-girl does—perhaps there's no great difference between their caste and hers. That's why they have such a regard for her, no doubt !

Bhikshuni. That's a true word.... Bimbisara, the king's father, is leaving his hermitage today, and coming in person to join our worship. I will go to welcome him. [*She goes out.*

Ajita. Where are you going, Srimati ?

Srimati. To wash the altar under the *asoka* tree.

Malati. Sister, do take me with you.

Nanda. I will go also.

Ajita. Yes, perhaps I might as well go too.

Vasavi. I too would like to see what kind of preparations you make.

Ratnavali. How charming ! Srimati will serve the altar, and you, maids-in-waiting, will do the fanning !

Vasavi. While you stand here and breathe out burning curses ! Well, that won't set the *asoka* on fire, and it won't disturb Srimati's peace of mind, either.

[*They all go out except RATNAVALI and MALLIKA.*

Ratnavali. This cannot last, it cannot last. It's completely against all nature. O Mallika, why wasn't I born a man ? Shame on these bracelets—if only I wore a sword instead ! You too, Mallika, you were silent all the time, you didn't say a word. Are you also pining to be maid-in-waiting to that dancer ?

Mallika. She would not have me, even if I were. She knows me too well.

Ratnavali. I can't understand how you can suffer this in silence. Patience is the weapon of the vulgar and helpless, not of the daughters of a royal house.

Mallika. I do not care to waste my strength. A day of reckoning is at hand, I know.

Ratnavali. Are you sure of that ?

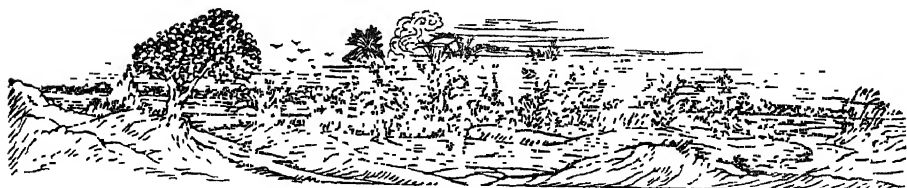
Mallika. Yes, quite sure.

Ratnavali. If it's a secret, don't tell me. All I wish to know is this—do we princesses stand by with folded hands, while that dancing-girl conducts the evening worship ?

Mallika. No, never, I give you my word.

Ratnavali. Amen to that, in the name of our palace gods !

[*To be continued*]



WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

By K. R. KRIPALANI

ONE by one the old stalwarts pass away. England will remember Sir William Rothenstein as a distinguished artist, a judicious critic and as a writer of literary merit. His portraits and drawings will continue to be treasured by art museums on both sides of the Atlantic, and his *Memoirs* will delight readers for generations to come. An accomplished artist, he wielded both pen and brush with equal dexterity. Unlike many artists, he had culture as well as talent. His intellectual sensibility, his wide and large-hearted sympathies and his capacity for friendship brought him wide and valuable contacts which he has so charmingly described in his three volumes of *Memoirs*.

Indians will remember him for his keen and sympathetic interest in Indian art and for his life-long friendship with Rabindranath Tagore. It is true that his understanding and appreciation of Indian art was neither as genuine nor as deep as that of, for example, Havell's. It is also true that he opposed Havell's proposal to entrust the building of New Delhi to Indian architects. This is how he justified his stand. "There was no reason why buildings which were to be occupied—so we thought then—by Englishmen should not be frankly European in plan and in elevation too." Apparently he believed that his countrymen were destined to be lodged in Delhi for ever. Just as Fatehpur Sikri endures as a monument to the Moghul genius for architecture, so the insipid, characterless, monotonous buildings of New Delhi will remain—unless they are pulled down and refashioned by Indian artists of a future free India—a testimony to the British lack of imagination and talent for art. Rothenstein's tribute to Lutyens does not speak well of his own critical judgment. "Yet Lutyens's genius for striking effects combined with charm of detail was to serve him well. I asked Lutyens to meet Tagore, when he cracked jokes all the time. It was not easy to convince Tagore that Lutyens was the right man for Delhi."

However, this is not the occasion to recall what Rothenstein failed to do. Rather we should gratefully acknowledge what he did. He it was who introduced Tagore to Yeats and to other literary men of England whose enthusiasm encouraged Tagore to consent to the

publication of 'Gitanjali.' He it was who proposed to the India Society to publish 'Gitanjali' which brought the Poet fame in Europe and the award of the Nobel Prize. We may take for granted that in trying to make Tagore known to his countrymen Rothenstein could not have had a very smooth and ready path. There were—as there still are—powerful elements in the English public life who would resent publicity and honour being given to an Indian. Rothenstein himself tells us : "Fox-Strangways wanted Oxford or Cambridge to give Tagore an honorary degree. Lord Curzon, when consulted, said that there were more distinguished men in India than Tagore. I wondered who they were ; and I regretted that England had left it to a foreign country to make the first emphatic acknowledgment of his contribution to literature."

Rothenstein's interest in Indian art dated before he met the Tagores. He had for some time been collecting Indian drawings which he greatly admired. His interest was further stimulated by his contact with Mrs. Herringham, Havell, Binyon and Coomaraswamy, who first showed him "drawings by Abanindranath Tagore and other artists of the Calcutta school, which he greatly admired." But hardly any one else in England was interested in the subject. "I could never understand the lack of interest in Indian art. . . Later, when Havell returned to England, he, Coomaraswamy and I went to hear a lecture by Sir George Birdwood, who while praising her crafts denied fine art to India ; the noble figure of Buddha he likened to a boiled suet pudding ! This so disgusted me that, there and then, I proposed we should found an India Society."

As Mrs. Herringham was leaving for India, Rothenstein also decided to see the land for himself. India Office was not encouraging. He was warned that his sympathy for India and for things Indian would encourage the Nationalists. He was advised to keep in touch with the officials and to this end was provided with letters to Provincial Governors. But despite the warnings and advice of the India Officer, his impressions of India turned out to be different from that of Mr. Beverly Nichols. (At that time Mr. Amery was not in India Office, nor Lord Linlithgow in Delhi.) This is what he writes of the Elephanta Caves in Bombay : "The rock-cut entrance to the cave-temple was simple and impressive ; then deep within the shadow we came upon the great Trimurti, a brooding group of three heads of

Brahma, carved with a breadth I had never seen surpassed. Then out of the gloom there emerged figures of Siva, of Siva and Parvati, and of attendant 'apsaras.' I knew that Southern India had crystallised, in the 'Nataraja' in the dance of a single figure, man's profoundest intuition of the universe more simply, more perfectly perhaps, than in any philosophy. This figure, poised between one movement and another symbolises the ordered movements of the planets through the contending forces of gravity and attraction ; but here in Elephanta the powerful figures, menacing, or lost in meditation, suggest the terror and the peace, the destructive and the creative aspects of nature—the agony of birth, the peace of sleep, and of death. How much sculpture loses when detached from its original setting and placed in a museum, I felt here as never before. We were overwhelmed by the dynamic force of these great carvings, and returned to Bombay with a new conception of plastic art."

No less interesting and enthusiastic is his description of Benares and the varied procession of humanity he watched day after day at its ghats. He has recorded his impressions not only in moving and lyrical prose but even more effectively in his beautiful drawing : "Morning at Benaras". In Calcutta he met for the first time the artist brothers—Gaganendranath and Abanindranath. Rabindranath he only saw. "I was attracted, each time I went to Jorasanko, by their uncle, a strikingly handsome figure, dressed in a white 'dhoti' and 'chaddur,' who sat silently listening as we talked. I felt an immediate attraction, and asked whether I might draw him, for I discerned an inner charm as well as great physical beauty, which I tried to set down with my pencil. That this uncle was one of the remarkable men of his time no one gave me a hint."

In 1912 when Rothenstein was back in England he came across a translation of a story by Rabindranath Tagore in the 'Modern Review' (very likely 'The Postmaster'). He was impressed and wanted to read more of him. He wrote about it to Jorasanko and received in return "an exercise book containing translations of poems by Rabindranath made by Ajit Chakravarty, a schoolmaster on the staff at Bolpur. The poems, of a highly mystical character, struck me as being still more remarkable than the story, though but rough translations." Soon after the poet himself visited England. As is well-known, he had been translating some of his poems in English

during his illness prior to his departure from India as well as on board the ship. This manuscript he gave to Rothenstien to read. "That evening," writes Rothenstien, "I read the poems. Here was poetry of a new order which seemed to me on a level with that of the great mystics. Andrew Bradley, to whom I showed them, agreed : It looks as though we have at last a great poet among us again', he wrote, I sent word to Yeats who failed to reply ; but when I wrote again he asked me to send him the poems, and when he had read them his enthusiasm equalled mine. . . The young poets came to sit at Tagore's feet ; Ezra Pound the most assiduously. Among others whom Tagore met were Shaw, Wells, Galsworthy, Andrew Bradley, Masefield, J. L. Hammond, Ernest Rhys, Fox-Strangways, Sturge Moore, and Robert Bridges. Tagore, for his part, was struck by the breadth of view and the rapidity of thought that he found among his new friends. 'Those who know the English only in India, do not know Englishmen,' he said."

The story of the publication of 'Gitanjali', its enthusiastic reception in the English Press, followed by the award of the Nobel Prize, is too well known to need repetition. But Rothenstein's testimony regarding the part played by Yeats in the publication of 'Gitanjali' is worth quoting : "I knew that it was said in India that the success of 'Gitanjali' was largely owing to Yeats's re-writing of Tagore's English. That this is false can easily be proved. The original MS. of 'Gitanjali' in English and in Bengali is in my possession. Yeats did here and there suggest slight changes, but the main text was printed as it came from Tagore's hands."

The friendship thus begun in London lasted all their lives. It is interesting to compare the letters the two wrote to each other when the award of the Nobel Prize was announced in November 1913. The letters crossed each other on the seas. On November 15, 1913, Rothenstein wrote : "My very dear friend—I open 'the Times' and a great shout comes from it—Rabindranath has won the Nobel Prize ! I cannot tell you of the delight this splendid homage gives me—the crown is now set upon your brow. Surely this, the greatest honour which can come to a man during his lifetime, must make your own heart swell a little, and then happily, the prize is materially substantial, and you will, at last I think, be rid of all anxiety regarding the school. We have made a holiday of this day—all rejoice in the robe of honour

in which you have been invested before the eyes of Europe. I took the children in a drive, a long promised one ; we had a glorious day, and as it is not often I play truant, the children were like a peal of bells. My dear friend, from the heart I send you my full congratulations. Never I think did ampler reward fit ampler merit ; your pilgrimage is one of the romances of literature. It should awaken the East like a trumpet blast and at last turn the minds of the young men to something more noble and fruitful than political intrigue. For yourself it will be an incentive to a new faith in your own great powers ; you are not of those whose heads can be turned by much praise, and in the solitude of Bolpur you will see still deeper into the mysteries of all those common things amongst which men live so unheeding. Poet of the sun, you will sit in the sun, poet of the night you will go forth into the night, poet of the human heart, you will bring warmth and comfort to a thousand cold and dispirited. Is not this a greater prize than any man can bestow ? To be chosen to serve your fellows and your neighbours now reach across the world. We send our love from house to house. Ever yours—W. R.”

Three days later the Poet was writing :

“The very first moment I received the message of the great honour conferred on me by the award of the Nobel Prize my heart turned towards you with love and gratitude. I felt certain that of all my friends none would be more glad at this news than you. Honour’s crown of honour is to know that it will rejoice the hearts of those whom we hold the most dear. But, all the same, it is a very great trial for me. The perfect whirlwind of public excitement it has given rise to is frightful. It is almost as bad as tying a tin can at a dog’s tail making it impossible for him to move without creating noise and collecting crowds all along. I am being smothered with telegrams and letters for the last few days and the people who never had any friendly feelings towards me nor ever read a line of my works are loudest in their protestations of joy. I cannot tell you how tired I am of all this shouting, the stupendous amount of its unreality being something appalling. Really these people honour the honour in me and not myself.”

They did not meet often, for Rothenstein never repeated his visit to India and Tagore’s visits to England were few and far between. But across the distance the friendship deepened with the

years. Their correspondence, which ended only with the Poet's death, bears ample testimony to it. It is to be hoped that it will be possible one day to publish these letters. It was a healthy friendship, rooted in genuine love and admiration on Rothenstein's part and yet free from all trace of insincere flattery or sentimental adulation. Commenting on Tagore's letter to him, quoted above, Rothenstein writes in his *Memoirs* : "He was not often to escape the tumult and peace was to be his but at rare moments. Henceforward Tagore was to become a world-figure. But great fame is a perilous thing, because it affects not indeed the whole man, but a part of him, and is apt to prove a tyrannous waster of time. Tagore, who had hitherto lived quietly in Bengal, devoting himself to poetry and to his school, would now grow restless. As a man longs for wine or tobacco, so Tagore could not resist the sympathy shown to a great idealist. He wanted to heal the wounds of the world. But a poet, shutting himself away from men to concentrate on his art, most helps his fellows ; to leave his study is to run great risks. No man respected truth, strength of character, single-mindedness and selflessness more than Tagore ; of these qualities he had his full share. But he got involved in contradictions. Too much flattery is as bad for a Commoner as for a King. Firm and frank advice was taken in good part by Tagore, but he could not always resist the sweet syrup offered him by injudicious worshippers."

Tagore would not have been the great artist he was if he had "shut himself away from men to concentrate on his art," as Rothenstein would have wished him to do. Unlike the so-called "pure" artists, he was an artist with a social conscience, and a moral vision. He took his place in the world of men, had his full share of their abuse and of their praise. Rothenstein perhaps did not know that during his long life the Poet had had as much of the bitter draught of the former as of the sweet syrup of the latter. The one did not turn his soul bitter, nor the other turn his head lighter. If he enjoyed the sweet syrup he also carried within him its bitter antidote.

However, whether Rothenstein's fears were justified or not, such honest, well-intentioned criticism is the best tribute a friend and admirer, can pay. Some lovers of Tagore will resent such criticism, for love easily turns into idolatry, and admiration into blind worship. Tagore had no patience with idol worshippers, but they clung to him

all the same, and will continue to cling to his name. Of such disciples Rothenstein wrote : "No man's company gives me more pleasure than Tagore's ; but among his disciples I am uncomfortable ; easy idealism is like Cézannism, or Whistlerism—no, away with the smooth talkers, with those who wear bland spiritual phylacteries upon their foreheads ! These men who specialise, as it were, in idealism, give me the sense of discomfort that I feel among other men who do not practise but preach. I marvel always at Tagore's patience with such, who weaken his artistic integrity by flattery, as they weakened Rodin's."

Such is the fate of great men ! Their tolerance and their humanity help them to endure the folly of their followers who everywhere and in all ages have been blind. Where the idol happens to be a Tagore or a Gandhi, the followers are at least harmless. At most they become bores and make themselves ridiculous. But where the idol is a Churchill, or a Hitler, or a Stalin, or even a Jinnah,—God help the world !

REVIEWS

SELF-RESTRAINT VERSUS SELF INDULGENCE. Part I :

M. K Gandhi Sixth edition, 1944. Navajivan Publishing
House. Ahmedabad Price Rs. 1/8/-

THIS is a collection of writings mostly reprinted from *Young India*, bearing on the subject of the above title. They were originally provoked by the controversy over Birth-Control which at one time seemed a question of vital importance. Birth-Control is necessary—in India more than anywhere else, today more than ever. Gandhiji has no doubt of that. "We only multiply slaves and weaklings, if we continue the process of precreation whilst we feel and remain helpless, diseased and famine-stricken. . . . I have not the shadow of a doubt that married people, if they wished well to the country and wanted to see India become a nation of strong and handsome full-formed men and women, would practise perfect self-restraint and cease to procreate for the time being." But "the only noble and straight method of birth control" is self-control or Brahmacharya. All other and "artificial methods are like putting a premium upon vice. They make man and woman reckless." Self-restraint is the only valid law of higher life, for individuals as well as for nations. He quotes with approval a French writer's saying : "The future is for the nations who are chaste."

Gandhiji's words, whether they refer to religion, morals or politics—in fact, being an integrated personality, there are no water-tight compartments between the three in his philosophy—, must be listened to with the highest respect and attention. For he lives what he says and never says a thing merely for the sake of saying it. Even when he takes, as he often does, an extremist and uncompromising stand and seems to take for granted that all men are potential Gandhis, he never fails to point out the right direction. Every Indian should therefore read this book and draw benefit from it according to his or her measure of receptivity. Though today we are obsessed—and very naturally—with purely political issues, we might never forget that a sound personal ethic is the only sure foundation of a strong, abiding and wholesome national life.

The Navajivan Publishing House is more than a publishing house. It is a national trust. When this book was more than half way through the press, the Navajivan Press was closed down and sealed by the Government in August 1942. Now that the press has been restored we may look forward to the continuance of this most valuable series of Gandhiji's writings.

K. K.

JAMINI ROY: By Bishnu Dey and John Irwin. Indian Society of Oriental Art, 1944. 11, Wellington Square, Calcutta.

JAMINI ROY is in vogue. His fame has travelled far beyond the borders of his province. His house, which is also his studio and his gallery, is one of the attractions of modern Calcutta. His pictures adorn the drawing rooms of his numerous admirers, both Indian and foreign. After a long and varied sadhana of many years his genius has won recognition for itself. Those who admired his sincerity, his courage and his talent long before the fashionable intellectuals "discovered" his genius, should be glad of this recognition.

It is but fitting that the Indian Society of Oriental Art should pay a tribute to his genius by publishing a special Number in his honour. Admirers of Jamini Roy will be glad to find in one volume so many reproductions of his paintings and drawings. Whether they will be equally benefited by reading the learned introductions by the two authors is less certain. Reading it, we were reminded of one of Tagore's verses: "Thy words are simple. my master, but not of them that talk of thee." The authors might have taken a lesson in simplicity from the artist whom they so much admire before preparing this erudite discourse on French aesthetics, anthropology, mytaphics of Aryan mythology, psychoanalysis, with a dash of Marxism—so fashionable today. While we respect their unbounded admiration of Jamini Roy's art we do not think they have served his cause well by ignoring or belittling other Indian artists. The only standards they could discover of measuring the genius of this Indian artist are foreign names, of which there is a plethora in the book. This is how the authors open their learned thesis. "By what standards are we to judge Jamini Roy? A genius experimenting in pure form? An Indian Giotto or Cézanne? Let us, at the outset, be

content with the simple claim that Jamini Roy is the only living painter in a country of four hundred million people who has achieved a really pure and vital intensity of creative expression." This is unfortunately a little too reminiscent of Mr. Beverley Nichols's statement that India seemed to him an artistic desert where Jamini Roy was a solitary oasis. It is not necessary to run down a whole people for the sake of praising a single individual, however well-known and worthy of praise. Jamini Roy himself would be the last person to relish such a compliment.

This criticism, for what it is worth, is given in a friendly spirit and is in no way meant to belittle either the credit of the authors whose learning, sincerity and enthusiasm are obvious or the merit of this publication. Lovers of Indian art will welcome this very opportune publication. There are in all sixteen plates, of which seven are in colour, besides several drawings reproduced in the text. We wish Jamini Roy's earlier work had been as adequately represented in the plates as his later work.

K. K.

SUVARNASAPTATI ŚĀSTRA OR SĀNKHYAKARIKĀ OF ĪSVARA KRSNA:

With a commentary reconstructed into Sanskrit from the Chinese translation.

Edited with English notes, etc. by N. Aiyaswami Sastri. Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanams Press, Tirupati. 1944. Price : Rs. 6/-.

WE warmly welcome Prof. N. Aiyaswami Sastri's valuable contribution in this volume to our Sino-Indian literature and studies. We also heartily congratulate Sri Venkatesvara Oriental Institute, Tirupati on having published the book in their series. The Sankhyakarika with commentary or Suvarna Saptati as it is styled in Chinese was carried to China and translated by Paramartha, a monk of Ujjain in 557-569 A. D.. His translation is well-known for its accuracy and trustworthiness to its original. I may here inform that Paramartha's original, i. e. Indian, name is found in K'ueichi's commentaries as Kulanatha, not Gunanatha as it is current especially amongst the Chinese scholars. The name Paramartha is only an adaptation from the Chinese *Chen-ti*. Prof. Sastri has discussed all the relevant points and established in his lengthy and critical introduction that the present Madharavitti cannot be the original of the Chinese. The notes added to each page are both annotative and informative.

It will be highly useful if the Chinese-Sanskrit Indices that are announced in the Preface are also published as the second part of the book. The printing and get-up are commendable. We earnestly hope that Prof. Sastri's endeavour in this line of studies will be much appreciated by all scholars both in India and abroad.

T. Y. S.

NOT BY POLITICS ALONE : by Atulananda Chakravarty. Thacker
Spink & Co. Ltd. Calcutta. Price Rs. 5/-.

IN a time when men are divided against one another and the voice of peace is drowned amidst the clang of arms, Mr. Chakravarti's book can bring some hope and determination in the hearts of those humanists who may have lost faith in the future of mankind. The theme of the book is Internationalism on the basis of a true brotherly feeling, and, particularly, it is Hindu-Muslim unity in India on a cultural plane which alone can be permanent and desirable. Politics cannot solve the communal problem : "A pact is not synonymous with unity. Its character is separative. It brings into focus how much one party can get out of the other. Unity, on the contrary, is born of the desire to contribute to the common objective" (p. 120). The author shows how the Indian History may be rewritten and the fact stressed in it that there has always been an essential unity amongst the Hindus and Muslims in India, the difference, if any, was never felt and it is not real but apparent. "Communal suspicion is a complex which politics does everything to perpetuate and which education must try to solve" (p. 143.). The author is not in favour of a Pakistan nor does he want that the majority should rule the minority, he is for a true democracy which is not so much political as spiritual. He appeals to our heart and finds fault with our intellectualism which leads us to seek solutions in politics and economics, in pacts and plans, which are no use when there is lack of love for one another. The author displays a breadth of vision born of detached contemplation, but he has shown not much fondness for clear and consecutive exposition. He is often repetitive, and offers statements,—may be sound in themselves, but disjointed and scarcely supported by facts or reason. For instance, he speaks of monarchy as a better ideal than mass democracy and forecasts that India may be a monarchical state after the wars ; he is in favour of the Indian States and also thinks that England will ultimately prove very useful for India and humanity at large. Then there is some initial confusion in the author's mind ; he sometimes says that unity must come as it is in evolution and in the nature of man, but again, that if we do not unite ourselves we will be wiped out and evolution will have no compunction for us. We can recommend this book to readers who are not very fastidious about logic and history but care for a noble and sincere spirit working in a book. The printing and get-up of the book are ordinary.

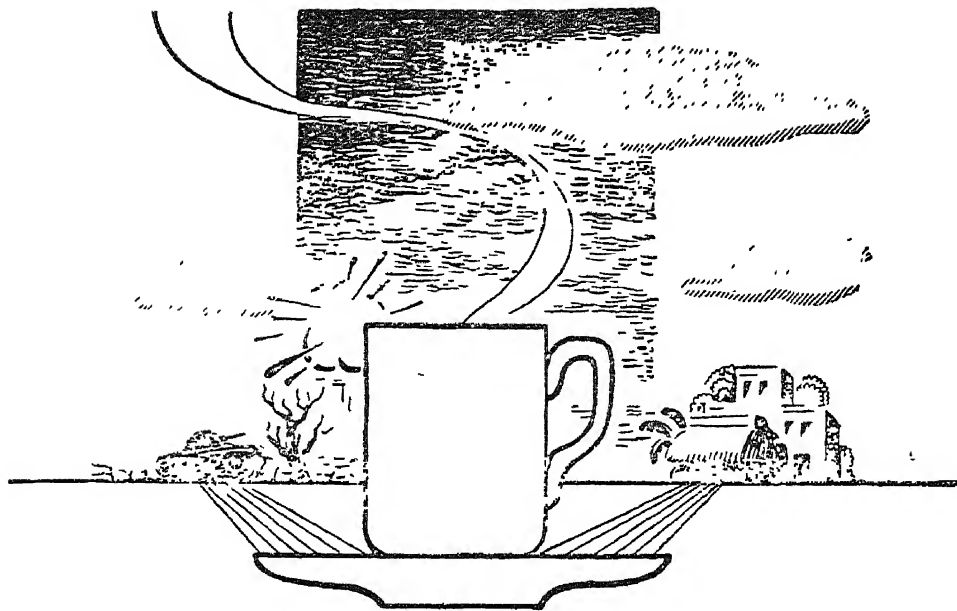
P. J. Chaudhury.

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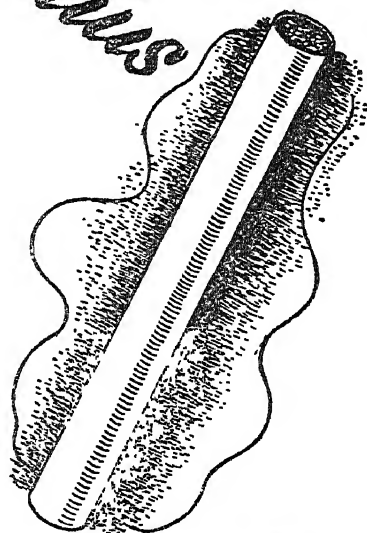
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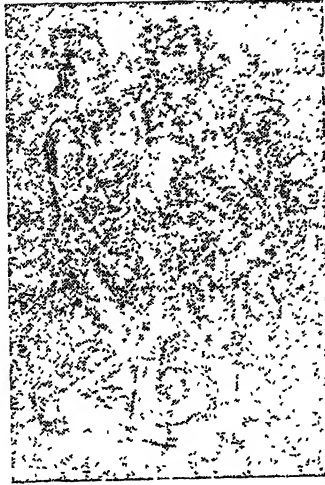
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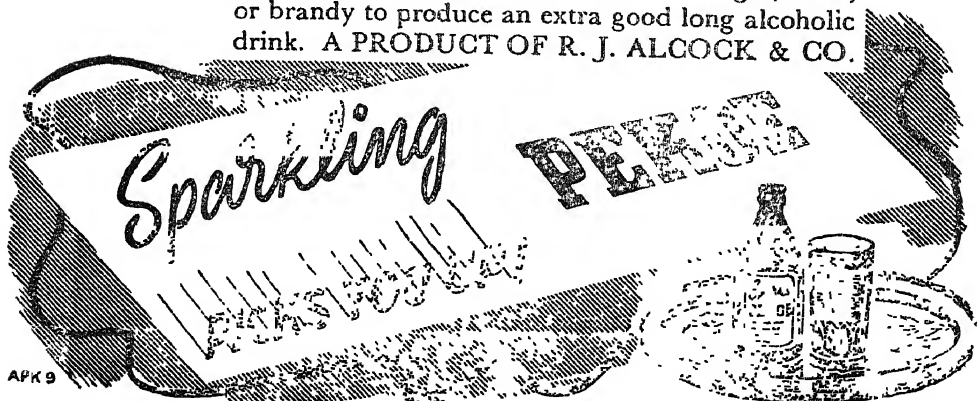
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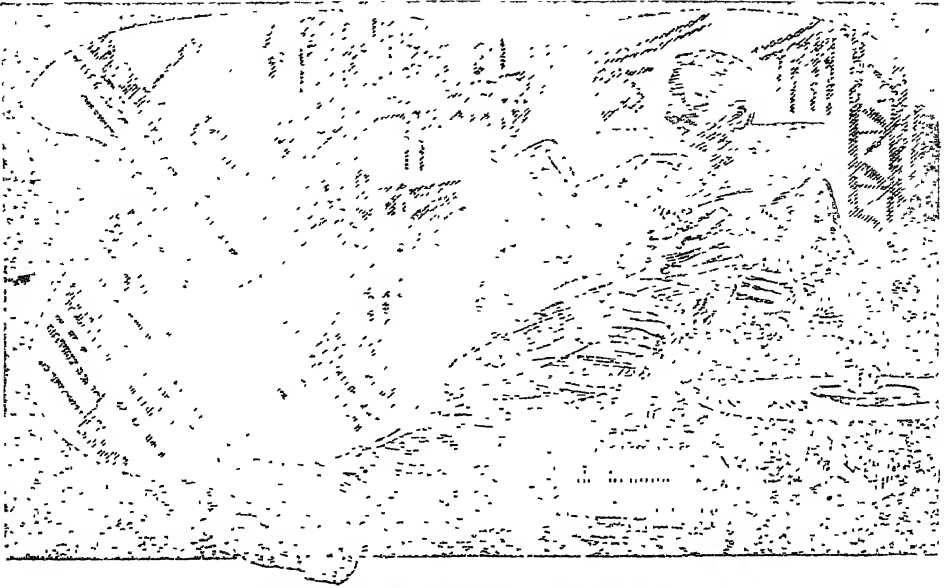
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